

S E R M O N S

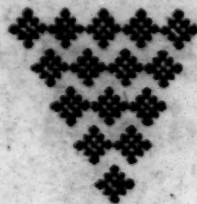
SPECULATIVE, PRACTICAL,

A N D

E X P E R I M E N T A L.

By THOMAS PENTYCROSS, A. M.

Chaplain to the Right Hon^{ble}. the EARL of
SELKIRK, and Rector of ST. MARY THE MORE,
WALLINGFORD, BERKSHIRE.



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AND

EXPERIMENTAL

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Chaplain to the Right Hon^{ble}. the Earl of
Selkirk, and Rector of St. Mark the Evangelist,
Wallingford, Berkshire.

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Gunn, Reading; Hearn, Bath; and
Inglis.

P R E F A C E.

To the PARISHIONERS of St. MARY
the More in WALLINGFORD, BERKS,
Health and Peace eternal.

SUFFER me to put into your
hands a *Synopsis* of all that hath been
delivered from your pulpit, since I
have been entrusted with it. You will
now have an opportunity of coolly
examining in private, what for almost
seven years hath been urged upon you
in public. And, what lies much upon
my heart, you will now be able, *after
my decease, to have these things always
in remembrance.* They are the only
doctrines of *our Church.* And such is
the distinguishing honor put upon them
by the *God of Truth*, that, while all
the Sermons not built on these prin-
ciples, howsoever elegant or moving,
leave

P R E F A C E.

leave men as they were, as unrighteous as before, producing no reformation in any, these truths never fail of making multitudes every where desist from their evil practices, repent, believe, enter upon a course of universal good works, and, notwithstanding human weakness within, and worldly discouragements without, persevere therein to their dying day. At which time also, the supports they are found to give, in thousands of instances, carry the mind far above both the fear and pains of death, and fill it with more than mortal triumph and glory.

Your eyes have seen the new and mighty concern for religion, which hath been excited by these sentiments, both among yourselves and most of the surrounding villages—what pains are taken to learn righteousness—what avidity in hearing—what great moral changes, of some, from heartless formality; of others, from profligacy, vanity and total disregard of religion, to genuin piety and humility.

A work

P R E F A C E.

A work like this who dares oppose, must do it at his eternal peril.

Some *errors* there are, indeed, in the *best*; and *Hypocrites* and *Enthusiasts* are to be expected *principally*, where real piety abounds *most*; but *mock suns* do not disparage the *true* one, nor the *spots* in that orb disprove its proper lustre and glory.

That all of you may be divinely enlightened and inspired; and that all, who are so blessed, may *adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things*, is both the object of these leaves, and the importunate prayer of,

Your most respectful and affectionate,
tho' unworthy, Servant in the Lord,

THOMAS PENTYCROSS,

Jan. 1st, 1781.

P R E F A C E .

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OF FUTURE PUNISHMENTS.

PSALM X. 13.

Wherefore doth the Wicked contemn God? He hath said in his Heart, Thou wilt not require it.

IF the *Angels*, those illustrious princes of heaven, those stars and suns of the universe, no sooner sinned but were ruined by it for ever, whence is it that *mankind*, sinning like them, and lying under the same sentence of condemnation* with them, forget it and are easy? Whence is it that the high majesty of the Being offended by sin does not overwhelm us with an infinite dread of punishment? To what principle can we reduce it, that any one not merely contemns his Maker by breaking his laws, but much more so by neglecting his threats? Such an one—Inspiration itself acquaints us, and experience verifies it—such an

* Mat. xxv. 14. Rom. iii. 23.

one hath said in his heart, he secretly thinks and trusts, *Thou (God) wilt not require it.* Such an one presumes to imagine, that the most holy Being will show some tenderness to vice; will allow lesser instances of it; and cannot, consistently with his goodness, require adequate punishments for it.

The infidel argues, that, because the Almighty is a pure benevolence, it is foreign to his nature to punish: though we all now live in a system that admits of punishments*; punishments, which, from their nature and uniformity, must have been constituted such by the *author* of our system: and though, secondly, we might fairly conclude, that, because a *pure benevolence* might *as such* be expected to punish *malice*, therefore, in the same way, a *purely virtuous* Being might *as such* be expected to punish *vice*. But, if not, as virtue is (what might easily be proved) of the nature of benevolence, and consequently † vice of the nature of malice, it follows, that vice may justly apprehend punishment from God considered only as a benevolent Being; and a punishment in some respects proportioned to the purity and

* See Bp. Butler's incomparable Analogy of Natural and Revealed Religion. Part. I. ch. 2. and 3.

† For, not to shew by an analysis of every particular vice the degree of selfishness, incompatible with benevolence, contained therein, it is certain, that, as virtue consists in such actions, as are essential to the well-being, if not to the very being, of the universe, *he* cannot be governed by a benevolent spirit, but the contrary, who violates the laws of virtue; and therefore a vicious man must be a malicious one; or, *Vice is of the nature of malice.*

infinity of his benevolence ; that is, exactly as the Scriptures teach, an *infinite* one.

Others pretend to impunity on a secret supposition, that *God intended we should sin* : and this supposition is built on a falsely stated fact, namely, that the mind is passive in feeling the motives which affect it ; or, that, in receiving the first impulse or influence which gives direction to our actions, man is not his own master. But are not reason and conscience expressly given us to correct and regulate whatever impressions we should otherwise instinctively and mechanically take ?—Admit us to be passive in the sense here contended for by infidels, and you destroy all possibility of *vice or virtue*, as well as of punishment. Indeed, common sense, philosophy and holy Scripture, conspire to teach us, that *evil is evil let it come how it may*. Imagine princes wantoning with the lives and wealth of their subjects ; judges wilfully corrupting good laws ; orphans robbed of their patrimony, and reduced from plenty to poverty ; friends perfidiously betraying friends, and under the appearance of having their interest at heart, accomplishing their ruin : and then consider, whether the quality of each of these actions be not intrinsically evil, let the manner of their origin in our minds be what it may.

Others alledge, that God will not require punishments to be endured for sin, because we are *weak* creatures. *Weak*, in what ? In proportion as we are *weak* in adhering to *virtue*,

*vice is strong in us**. We are less devoted in this case to virtue than to vice. Surely no one can think this high aggravation of our conduct is an excuse for it. And if it be said, how came I to be thus weak? Why had I a sinful nature entailed on me, in consequence (suppose) of Adam's federal sin? I answer, it is certain (*a priori*) from the justice as well as goodness of God, that we have no corrupt nature derived to us from Adam, but what we should have had without him, if probationers each for ourselves. That is, had we been born innocent, and derived no corrupt nature from Adam, we should, doubtless, have sinned, and contracted a corrupt nature *ourselves*. For no one can suppose we were put into a representation by Adam, to fall in him and be ruined by him, if, without such a representation, we should have stood and been saved. It is, doubtless, our own immediate and personal fall, considered as certainly foreseen by the Almighty, which alone and sufficiently justifies him in permitting us to fall, for great and wise ends, in *Adam*. We ought, therefore, to think of our

* An old author of some reputation, whom I would not name, lest I should farther recommend, says, "Tell a man who is under the power of lust, of the omnipresence of God, of the reverence due to his own body, of the attendance of pure angels upon us, of the ugliness and turpitude of sin, and you will move him no more than one of Tully's orations would a mule. He has *no power to resist*: he is all *weakness*: he *must* sin. But let a boy enter his chamber of filthy pleasure, and discover his folly, and either his lust suddenly disbands, or his shame hides it." We see then how deceitful this pretence of *weakness* and *inability* is, and what *strength of sin* is contained in such moral impotence.

sinful nature, in point of *blame*, as not derived to us by *Adam*, but contracted by ourselves.

Enquire of some, why they are composed and happy, when both Testaments, the Old and New, join in declaring, that *the Law of the Lord is*—what we can alone suppose it must be—*perfect**—and *Christ came not to destroy the Law, but to fulfil it*†: also, *whoever SHALL KEEP THE WHOLE LAW, and yet offendeth IN ONE POINT, is guilty of all*‡; and, *cursed is he who continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them*§.—Enquire of some, why, under these circumstances of endless ruin they are composed and happy; and their answer will be, in full contradiction to these express declarations in either Testament—they have only *imperfections* to account for. But, as at every step in which we advance towards a perfection of taste in arts, we are still proportionally less able to endure, and are more prone to despise and abominate *imperfections in those arts*; in music, for instance; where the least departure from time and melody is more sensible and painful to us, as our taste for that science is higher and more finished; and in painting, where the least heaviness offends the judicious eye in proportion to its discernment; so, we may naturally conclude, the least improprieties in morals will disgust a virtuous observer, in proportion to his sense and love of virtue; and, consequently, the least impro-

* Psalm xix.

† St. James, ch. ii.

‡ Matthew, ch. v.

§ Galatians, ch. iii.

prieties in morals must irritate|| the supreme and infinite lover of virtue; that is, the Almighty, in an infinite degree.

By imperfections we sometimes mean such sins as are reputed little, and sometimes merely deficiency in duties, where they are acknowledged not to be performed in every respect as they ought. With respect to the evil of sins reputed little, it will be hereafter shewn at large, that these are sufficient of themselves to draw down heavy punishments even on the best of men that ever lived. But, supposing there were some weight in the pretence that our sins are but little, *if those little sins were rarely to be met with in our whole long life*; still, it must be otherwise, far otherwise, the case must be perfectly altered, where our little sins and imperfections are, as the best men confess they are, *perpetual*, in one form or another, and not unfrequent, or scarce; and where the *multitude* of them amply makes up for what they want in *magnitude*. For*, *who can tell how oft he offendeth? O cleanse thou me*, said the man after God's own heart, *from my secret faults*. In *many things we offend all*, said an apostle;† and *he that could say he offendeth not in his tongue*, would be, what the earth never saw but twice,

|| When human passions are attributed to the Deity, either in holy writ, or in any other compositions, all that is intended to be understood by them seems to be, that the behaviour of the Deity, under those circumstances to which those passions ascribed to him refer, will be the same, *as if* he were really influenced by such passions.

* Psalm xix.

† St. James, chap. iii.

first in Adam while innocent, and afterwards in Christ—a *perfect man*, and able also to *bridle the whole body*. Let one man offend another only in *slight* instances again and again continually and wilfully, and let him discover a disposition (as we all do respecting God) to repeat still for ever, as long as we live, our *little* affronts, and then consider, whether the greatness of the number of these slight offences, thus persisted in wilfully, and likely to be so for ever, will not amount to a degree of inexcusable and highly punishable malignity. Apply this to our sinful imperfections, and say, if you can, without doing violence to Common Sense, *Thou* (God) *wilt not require* or take cognizance of them†.

Besides, little sins are of the same quality, though not of the same quantity as great ones. And thus, as the figure and ramifications of an oak are discoverable in an acorn, so is adultery enveloped in a lascivious thought, and murder in an angry one, our Lord himself being judge. And, as the acorn, under favour of all the necessary circumstances of suitable soil and weather, would infallibly protrude upon the world, in due length of time, the complete tree of which it is the seed, so would little sins, under suitable circumstances, end in great ones, of which they are the elements and first principles. When therefore we have *only imperfections* to account for, and have our fate for eternity de-

† As the Septuagint has it, & ζητησθαι.

pending on the judgment of one, who looks far less at the action than the *heart*; (for *there* lies all the criminality; bodily organs, which alone distinguish thoughts from actions, being incapable of virtue or vice) what may we not dread from such a trial! We must surely put our cause upon some new issue.

With respect to imperfections, considered as deficiencies in duty, and not as little, actual sins, our hopes of the divine favour must be groundless, if we rely on having *only these* imputable to us. (Though no man can say that *only these*, and no other or greater evils, are imputable to him.) For, when the Almighty surveys our vivacity, our vehemence, and sometimes ecstasy, together with our long-continued yet pleasurable toil in things that relate to ourselves and this world; and compares them with our sluggishness and frigidity, in things that relate to our duty and to him: when he sees how well we can love sin, and folly, and how ill we love Jesus Christ, though he *died* for us: when he observes our high degree of gratitude to fellow-creatures, in some instances, for their little transient services, and how forgetful and unfeeling we are to him, who gives us and our benefactors *all* they or we have, or ever had: when he marks us in the midst of worship, putting him off with frivolous outward rites, but in our worldly concerns denying no expence, no care, no seriousness; can all these imperfections in duty be unaffecting or unprovoking to him? What! when we are com-
manded

manded to love him *only as he deserves from us*, can we yet seldom find any glow of love to him at all ; but at the same time can find ourselves able enough to love things of little or no worth, very highly and *far more than they deserve*, and all this *constantly*? *Will not God require this*? Will he not properly resent it, that we act nothing so ill as our obedience to Him?

What sort of parents, husbands, friends, subjects, should we be, if towards our children, wives, friends, and lawful prince, we should shew the same unstable and insufficient attachment which we feel towards our Maker? Will mankind take well at our hands frequent instances of aversion in parents to their children, of infidelity in husbands to their wives, of treachery in friends to friends, of rebellion in subjects to their lawful prince? Will the pretence of imperfections justify or save us in these instances?

With respect to imperfections in our prayers. Our attention is fixed, and unable to move, *in proportion as our hearts are engaged in any thing*: how our thoughts will be riveted, for instance, when we hear of a decisive victory in the present war, and while the particulars of it are relating to us: how rapt are we in the act of hearing by letter from an absent and endearing child, wife, parent, or friend: and, universally, where our thoughts cannot easily be fastened to a subject, it is because our hearts are proportionally not engaged in it. How offended then must the Almighty be at an idea like this?
What!

What ! can *news* do more to retain our minds from wandering, than the Deity himself can in the act of receiving our adorations ! What ? can science, or earthly connections engage our hearts more than our duty ? If so, what *contemptible* duty must ours be, and how must it tend far more to *exasperate**, than in any sense to *please* the object of it. Having, therefore, only *imperfections* to account for, is having that to account for which essentially contains an heart-preference of this world to another ; and of the creature, or self, to the creator : exactly as our SAVIOUR says†, *Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also*. O ! what evil then is hid in our *imperfections*.

Who can perform any business whatever ; who can paint ; who can carve ; who can build, without due collectedness of mind ? But such are our low ideas of prayer, that we can perform *it*, or rather *fancy* we can, though our minds be never so uncollected, and though impertinent thoughts be suffered not merely to pass through them, but to remain there. These imperfections in our prayers must not only render them so far no prayers at all, but must make our worship a ridiculous thing, and therefore highly offensive to God. And thus it is as the prophet speaks, ‡ *He that killeth an ox (in sacrifice) is as if he slew a man ; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck ;*

* The Septuagint version of the text is, ΕΥΕΚΕΝ ΤΙΣΟΣ ΠΑΡΩΞΥΝΕΝ ὁ ἀσεβὴς τὸν θεόν ; εἴτε γὰρ, &c. Wherefore hath the wicked provoked or exasperated God ?

† Matt. vi. Luke 12.

‡ Is. lxvi. 3.

He that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood: He that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol. Bring no more vain oblations; (says God, by the same prophet, in another place.) Incense is an ABOMINATION unto me. But still more exact is the forcible language of Malachi†. If ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? Offer it now unto thy governor, will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person, saith the Lord of Hosts?*

Say not again we are weak creatures. For this weakness is itself our *wickedness*: it implies a want of engagedness of soul in prayer; the heart is not at home, in proportion as our thoughts wander, in them. Were the heart more united to the work, we should find the same fixed attention in it, that we do in all other things, in which we are cordially interested. And accordingly our Saviour expresses a contempt for such religious Acts, where he says, ‡ *This people draweth nigh unto God with their lips, but their hearts are far from him.*

To illustrate this point yet farther. Prayer contains, among other things, a sinner's application, to an offended God for pardon through the Redeemer. To conceive aright, then, of the evil of wandrings of thought in prayer, imagine a sublime monarch seated on a throne of grace, on purpose to receive and bless a sup-

* Is. i. 13.

† Mal. i.

‡ Matt. xv.

pliant imploring his life,—and imagine such a suppliant, instead of having his thoughts and looks hanging on the prince, to be, in the very act of kneeling before him, turning round and indolently looking here and there with frequent and manifest marks of unconcern and neglect. Would not *such imperfection alone* tend to make such a prince determine (and fitly too) that his suppliant should be instantly dismissed from his presence, and led out to that punishment which his crimes merited, and to avoid which his petitions themselves betrayed so extreme an indifference?

Concerning our imperfections at the sacrament; to pretend to remember Christ at his table, with the moving pictures of his sufferings, namely, wine poured out like his blood, and bread broken like his body,—to pretend to do this in a solemn formal act, and yet neither to be affected with those sufferings, nor to have our faith in his willingness to save confirmed by them; but even here at our Lord's own table, to be capable of volatility, perversely recurring still in the midst of this august ceremony, to our center the world, to business, to engagements, any thing; what an affront, what a crime must such sacramenting be! What! not able to fix our hearts in a service like this? What! have the toys of earth absorbed all our affections, and left none for a transaction like that of a *sinner's* admission to the *Redeemer's table*? where we not only sup with him, and he with us, but are reminded that his love to
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One word more shall close the subject of imperfections; and that is concerning wanderings of thought when we are not employed in prayers; such wanderings as are usually called *reveries*. How harmless does it seem, and how pleasing is it, to let our fancy rove discursively for a long time together, in framing to ourselves how *we* could wish to dispose events, were we but in other and sufficient circumstances: how well we would provide for the success of some particular plans; or how amply we would consult the comfort of this and the other person, did we possess such resources of wealth and power, as were competent to our purposes. Examine all this; sift every vain imagination of a like sort, and the grain of it will plainly appear to be, a dissatisfaction with the arrangements of an infinitely wise providence; a conceit that we could have managed those particular parts of his decrees that offend us, more fitly than he has done; if not a secret wish that we were able to disturb the whole order in which providence hath disposed things, for the sake of disposing them according to *our* inclination and judgement.

If *this* were not the evil, there was certainly *some* evil, and no small degree of it, in these mere irregularities of the imagination, which
David

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David

David saw, when in his public character of an holy man of God, the Holy Ghost makes him exclaim in the hearing of a long posterity, *I hate vain thoughts.*

In fine: however prone we may be to *think what we wish to be true**, respecting *future punishment*, as well as every thing else, let us only reflect, whether, if this earth, and the plan of it were not yet formed, it would not be far more likely that *sin should never exist*, than that, *if existing*, it should be *suitably punished*? Now as the existence of sin is a clear and certain fact, it follows, that the existence of suitable punishment for sin is *more probable*, than the existence of a clear and certain *fact*, or *what we see with our eyes.*

What the quantity of suitable punishments for sin is, we cannot judge in our present state, unless we knew perfectly three things; namely, the evil of sin in itself; all the evils sin has wrought; and how necessary punishments may be respecting *eternity*, as we find they are for *this world*. It is, however, certain, that, as the *time of committing sin* is no measure either of the *evil* of sin, or of the evils sin has occasioned; or of the usefulness of punishment for it; therefore, it is no reason that *sin* may not be punished *for ever*, because it was committed in the short term of *our life on earth*. And it is also certain, that in our present state, we cannot properly judge either of the evil of

* Ο τι βυλεται τεθ' αγαθος υιεται, said Demosthenes to the Athenians.

sin in itself, or of the evils it has produced ; or of the benefit that may accrue to the universe from adequately punishing it. Of the evil of sin in itself we cannot judge, because the evil of sin appears *variously* to us ; though always *worse*, as our minds are *purser* and *better* : *still worse* therefore must it appear to *angelic* minds ; and *bad beyond all bounds* to the *infinitely pure and good* GOD. As, therefore, our views are infinitely disproportionate to those of the Supreme Being, our apprehensions of the evil of sin are likely to be *infinitely less* than they ought to be ; and, consequently, it is probable, that an infinite, or eternal punishment may justly be preparing for sin, as the Scriptures positively assert, while *we* are thinking it only *a venial infirmity, with no great harm in it*. Of the evils which sin has wrought, also ; and of the necessity there may be of punishing it adequately, with respect to a system that is to last for *eternity*, whose eternal happiness may in some respects depend on such a punishment ; of these things we can know no more in our present state, than we can of the proper and full evil of sin itself. To affirm, therefore, that *eternal* punishment for sin is excessive, unjust, and, consequently, unreal, is more than we can *prove*, or have a right to believe. Neither can we be justified, on the principles of prudence, in not acting as if the Scripture-denunciations against sin would be fulfilled, unless, what is impossible, we can *demonstrate*, that it is impossible such denunciations ever should be fulfilled.

The

The *multitude* of finners can be no sufficient argument against future punishment: because, first, many and few, like great and small, being the *relative* ideas of *creatures*, can have no place in the *absolute divine mind*: and secondly, as the earth, in respect of all space, or only in respect of some of the fixed stars, is a vanishing, invisible point; so the inhabitants of earth may, probably, be to those of all the universe, an inconsiderable atom and a nullity. Indeed so they seem to have been considered *once* by the Almighty, and in a *penal* way too; in the instance of the deluge. *The flood came and swept them all away*, the whole race of the millions of mankind, except eight persons, in one wide, horrible, and undistinguishing ruin. And I mention this instance the rather, because the proof of it is acknowledged by authors both inspired and uninspired.

But enough for this time:—May we be clear, certain and exact as geometry itself; and, at the same time, serious as death itself, in enquiring, whether we may safely say in our hearts, *Thou (God) wilt not require* more and better of us than we perform and are: And may we (if both reason and Scripture united so appear to direct us) desist from all hope in our own performances, and seek mercy, where alone it can honourably and infallibly be found, in the FREE GRACE OF GOD*, through JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD.

* Rom. iii. 24. iv. 16. xi. 5, 6. Eph. ii. 5. 2 Thess. ii. 16. Titus, iii. 7. 2 Tim. i. 9.

END OF THE FIRST SERMON.

 OF FUTURE PUNISHMENTS.

S E R M O N II.

P S A L M X. 13.

Wherefore doth the Wicked contemn God? He hath said in his Heart, Thou wilt not require it.

VARIOUS are the dependencies of sinful men for the future safety of their souls. And there must needs be some *appearance of reason* in the ground of their hopes, otherwise no one could be expected to build on them. It was not without specious argumentation that the grand deceiver imposed on our first parents. *Ye shall not surely die*, said he; *for God doth know**—implying, that they might safely trust the goodness, and even the equity of God, for not punishing them: that their sin would be an advantage to them, *Ye shall be as Gods*, and there could not be any disadvantage or detriment to the Most High, who is all-sufficient to himself, and independent: and therefore they might fitly hazard the execution of a

* Gen. iii. 4, 5.

penalty, which had so much the air of a mere terror. The inference seemed true: *Eve* acted upon it, plucked the forbidden fruit, gave to her husband, and both of them were undone: undone, notwithstanding their presuming on the divine attributes to the contrary: undone, though the crime looked to be trivial and inconsiderable: undone, though they had each very plausible excuses to make; *Adam* transferring the guilt totally from himself to the woman; and even to God himself ultimately, for being the author of his circumstances—*The woman whom THOU GAVEST to be with me, she gave me the fruit**, said he: and *Eve* removing the blame wholly to the serpent; *the serpent*, said she, *BEGUILED ME, and I did eat†*. And there is great reason to think that this most antient and curious record of the first ruin of mankind was carefully preserved to us by the Holy Ghost, that all of us might learn to suspect that *old serpent the devil*, as the author of any hopes of future impunity, which oppose the plain and solemn declarations of God's word: as also, that we might learn, in the very first page of history, that excision from God, the fountain of happiness, is the threatened, and will be the real punishment of any the *least* departure from duty: of merely *eating an apple*, if our Maker had prohibited it.

Viewed in this light, how absurd and preposterous is the expectation of many, that their

* Gen. iii. 12.

† v. 13.

GOOD *qualities will be considered in their favour, in contradistinction to their BAD ones.* For surely our good qualities are not likely to be better than were those of Eve, before she sinned: for, till that sad moment, all her good qualities were heavenly-bright, and beautiful beyond any thing we can now conceive: and our bad qualities are at least as bad as hers, if not far worse, beyond all comparison; for she *only tasted a piece of fruit*, against the command of God: a crime which she appears to have committed with a little more simplicity, and a little less of evil intention, than what falls to the share of most of *our* bad qualities. And yet, we know the event; we know the treatment she met with from a Being of infinite equity, and, at the same time, of infinite goodness.

The truth is (what immediately destroys the vain confidence now under examination) that *our greatest goodness is, with respect to God, infinitely small, and our least sinfulness infinitely great.*

My goodness, says David, extendeth not unto thee§. And *Lebanon, says Isaiah, were its whole extensive forests of costly cedars cut down, to compose one vast pile of sacrifice, is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof, tho' finely fed, and numerous, sufficient for a burnt-offering*†.

The goodness of the very SERAPHIM, says the same prophet, is in the sight of God inconsiderably small. Agreeable to which, those ex-

§ Psal. xvi. 2.

† Isaiah xl. 16.

alted creatures, always placed so near to the throne and person of God in heaven, the best and best-beloved by him of all creatures in the universe, to whom he has even given a *name* descriptive of their high moral beauty and excellence ||—these glorious SERAPHIM have no goodness fit for the complacency of the Great Supreme; and therefore *with twain of their wings they cover their faces, and with twain their feet, while with twain they fly**. And what is more, to shew that they do not *under-value* themselves, in the opinion they entertain of their perfect goodness as vanishingly small, (which *under-valuing*, as proceeding from ignorance, and consisting of error in judgment, could be no *virtue*) the Almighty himself speaks of their utmost goodness considered all together under one view, in terms as diminishing as their own ideas of it are; namely, that *he chargeth them with FOLLY†*: that *he PUTTETH NO TRUST in his saints†*; that when he looks *to the moon, it shineth not; yea, the stars*, (which, being an order of creatures here placed *between* God and men, and in point of *moral* splendor compared with them, must certainly signify *angels*) *yea, these stars ARE NOT PURE in his sight§*. Their goodness, then, is infinitely small, and,

|| שרפים (from שרף to burn) as if their very persons were so many pure, radiant, and ever-burning flames of devotion and goodness.

* Isaiah vi. *The feet* are constantly used in Scripture as emblems of obedience. The Seraphim therefore *covering* their feet, signifies their *concealing* their obedience both from the eyes of God and of themselves. † Job xv. 15. † Job iv. 18. § Job xxv. 5.

consequently,

consequently, that of *man*, who in this place is called a *worm*, a low, mean, and sordid creature, in respect of them, must be, I had almost said, *less than infinitely small*.

At the same time *our least possible badness*, or the least sin we can commit, is *an evil** INFINITELY GREAT. For so great an evil must that be, which has the worst and most horrible tendency of all other things whatever; than which nothing *can be more* horrible, or worse. But the nature of sin as sin, and therefore of the least sin, has a tendency thus horrible; for it tends strongly, essentially, and totally, to abolish and destroy *virtue*, and therefore to abolish and destroy the *ineffable God*, who *consists* of virtue; who is the fountain of all the virtue that is, and who being cut off, the streams must fail of course. Nothing, and no one would then be left to shame, to contradict, or to punish sin; its life would be easy and happy, and its sway unmolested, supreme, and eternal. The Scriptures very frequently mark this tendency of sin, in plain and forcible expressions; such as a malicious *kicking*§ at him, *reproaching*† him, *despising his counsels*||, and *not choosing his fear*‡; a dismissing him with contempt and disdain, *Depart from us*, (that is, *begone*) *we desire not the knowledge of thy ways*¶; a voting into the

* This topic hath been lately handled with great ability, by the Rev. Mr. De Coetlogon, in his thirteenth sermon on the 51st Psalm. His two octavo volumes of comment on that Psalm deserve an acceptance peculiarly favourable, if weightiness and variety of matter, ease and purity of style, and depth of argument, claim the public regard.

§ Deut. xxxii. 15. 1 Sam. ii. 29. Acts ix. 5. † Rom. xv. 3.

|| Lev. xxv. 43. Prov. i. 30. ‡ Prov. i. 29. ¶ Job xxi. 14.

chair of supreme authority its own chief patron and general, *the Devil*; as our Lord speaks, *Ye are of your father the devil, and the works of your father ye do**; wherefore him the apostle Paul actually stiles *THE GOD of this world†*, as having been set up by sinful creatures to the exclusion of the original and *only true God*. But how plain is the voice of sin in that expression, *Cause the Holy One of Israel to CEASE from before us‡*; that is, let him not exist, if possible, be destroyed: as said the wife of Job, *Curse God, and die*; or, as the Psalmist more universally delivers the language of sin, *The Fool (or sinner) says in his heart, that is, in his wish and inclination, No God||*! If I could effect it, there should be none. He is my only obstacle and terror. *We will not have this man* (which man, in the parable§, signifies the Great King of heaven and earth) *to reign over us*. But, what is much more than all, when *God was manifest in the flesh, and dwelt among us*, nothing but his *death* would satisfy sin. *His blood*, called in the Acts the blood of God¶, sin could shed with pleasure, with greater pleasure than any other: the blood of *Barabbas* had no sweetness in it, compared with that of **GOD OUR SAVIOUR**.

The malignity therefore of sin, as such, and therefore of the *least* sin, is infinitely great. It tends to abolish and destroy the Most High and uncreated God. It tends to this as naturally,

* John viii. 44.

† 2 Cor. iv. 4.

‡ Isaiah xxx. 11.

|| The original is אמר נבל בלבו אין אלהים *The wicked says in his heart, No God!* Not, *there is no God*. Ps. xiv. 1.

§ Luke xix. 14.

¶ Acts xx. 28.

as in mechanics one contrary force tends to destroy another.

The infinite evil of sin might be proved, by considering the measures which we use in judging of the evil of crimes ; one of which is, *that they are worse in proportion to the greatness of the Being offended by them* ; as the same act of assault is worse as committed against a Prince, than against a man of no rank. To which might be added, that *every crime is also reputed worse in proportion to the worthiness and amiableness of the Being offended by it*. And, again, *worse in proportion to the wisdom of the Being offended by it* ; as the wisdom of Socrates makes the crime of his judges, in putting him to death, greater, than if they had ordered a man of plain understanding for execution. A crime is also worse *in proportion to our obligations to him who is offended by it*. If these obligations are unspeakably great, the crime is unspeakably great. If therefore the majesty of God, if the worthiness and amiableness of God, if his wisdom be infinite, and if our obligations to him, for the first gift of our existence, and ever since, even while we are sinning against him, for continuing our very selves to us, be infinite, then, on each of these accounts separately considered, sin is an infinite evil ; but on all these accounts taken together, the evil of sin is *infinite upon infinite, added to infinite upon infinite*. The sum of its malignity might be expressed by abstract symbols, but can never be conceived by any created mind. We

may well ask ourselves then with Job*, *Is not thy wickedness great, and thine iniquities infinite?*

But let us use another and more popular plan in contemplating the horror of sin, and the impossibility that any human goodness should cancel it; unless that which is *infinitely small* can vie with and eclipse that which is *infinitely great*.—*Actions speak louder than words*; and the *actions of the Almighty*, with respect to sin, will decide the point more easily, and be better understood, than any argumentation whatever. And here it is undeniable that the Almighty hath, in many public instances, treated the *least* sins, sins of thought, that never came into act, and such sins, as we might almost mistake for virtues, as if they were evils of immense magnitude: and what is more, in the persons of the greatest and best of men, the most conspicuous favourites He ever had.

Moses was very desirous of arriving at the promised land in person: *I besought the Lord*, says he, *at that time, saying, I pray thee let me go over, and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon: but the Lord was wroth with me, and would not hear me*†. Why was this request denied, when so many others, when almost all others he ever made, were granted? *He spake unadvisedly with his lips*‡, at Meribah. *Hear now, ye rebels*||, said he. This was his single crime; and for this single fit of passion, when the perverse and

* Job xxii. 5.

† Psal. evi. 33.

‡ Deut. iii. 23, &c.

|| Numb xx. 10.

contumelious

contumelious behaviour of the Jews had provoked him, so as to make his anger but too natural, and almost unavoidable; on which account Moses never mentions it without throwing part of the blame on *them*; and David also places it in the same light; *it went ill*, says he, *with Moses* FOR THEIR SAKES, *because they provoked his spirit**: yet still, for this sudden gust of rage, so great, so good a man as Moses, who was not addicted to hastiness of temper, whose general character was meekness, a meekness so very extraordinary as to become *proverbial*; and not only so, but was made proverbial by God himself, who declared him to be *meek above all the men that were on the face of the whole earth*; nevertheless, for this solitary trespass, a personage illustrious as Moses, must, in a judicial way, be excluded the Land of Promise.

The wife of Lot, pious Lot, Abraham's brother, was in a moment taken from her husband, children, friends, and made a spectacle of divine justice to the most distant ages†. She was turned into a petrefaction, a pillar of salt. What was her crime? She only looked back on Sodom with regret, when expelled from it; she only cast a tender parting eye on a place, which had been for some time her residence; a place, which for beauty was compared to the *garden of the Lord*, to *Eden*; a place, which, with all its temples and inhabitants, was now

* Ps. cvi. 32.

† Josephus, *Antiq.* 1. 12. says, that the pillar of salt was standing in his time; and the same is affirmed by later writers.

going to be destroyed by fire and brimstone from heaven. Her retorted eye, many would have thought, was even *virtuous*: that it argued an attachment to the spot where providence had fixed the bounds of her habitation, and therefore argued an excess of contentment with the dispensations of providence. It might appear to others to be the fruit of fine compassion for sufferers under the stroke of divine displeasure. But, however it appeared to mortal imagination, the look contained a dissatisfaction with the government of God, in this instance of punishing the most filthy and horrible of vices; and, therefore, her look and limbs were suddenly hardened, chilled, and changed into a pillar of salt. What evil then is there only in a sinful look! Remember Lot's wife†, says the HOLY GHOST in the Gospel.

The man, who simply gathered sticks on the *sabbath*, was brought in a criminal of such a size, as to deserve, by the decision of God himself, nothing less than *lapidation*§. *All the congregation of Israel were to stone him with stones till he died.* Doubtless he did not *wantonly* gather the sticks; doubtless he thought that the rigor of the sabbath could never extend to so small an act as this: doubtless the propriety of warmth in cold seasons, or else of dressing food to satisfy his hunger, seemed to him fully to justify so harmless an act, as the gathering a bundle of fuel. No! diligent as he had been

† Luke xvii. 32.

§ Numbers xv. 32.

before in conforming to the strictness of the sabbath, (or else he had been stoned before) and inoffensive and vindicable as the gleaning a few sticks on the sabbath might seem, his past regularity was all forgotten, his pretences were vain; he ought to have recollected that *manna itself*, the food from heaven, was not to be gathered, amidst the high typical sacredness of the sabbath; and therefore he must die. The violation was big with mischiefs, and frustrated the intention of the day, which being devoted all to *perfect rest*, was designed to typify, that we were to cease from our own works, in point of hope, or fear, and to enter into complete eternal rest of conscience, by believing on Jesus's finished salvation; in which *we* are to have not the least hand, *to which nothing can be added* by us, and *from which nothing can be taken away* §. So the apostle, speaking directly on the subject, says, † *He that is entered into the sabbatism, or rest, which remaineth for the people of God, hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his* ||.

Nadab and Abihu must strike us with wonder in sacred story. They only lit the fire of the

§ Eccles. iii. 14.

† Heb. iv. 10.

|| Many plain and sufficient authorities may be produced for the translation of the *day* on which the sabbath is to be kept, from the seventh to the first day of the week: but with me none have been so satisfactory as the *reason of that change in the nature of things*. Thus: as the reason that the sabbath was first affixed to the seventh day of the week was, because *on that day God rested from all the works he had made*; and as this sabbatism is expressly said to be figurative of the spiritual rest of faith in *Christ*, therefore the reason of the thing now requires, that the sabbath should be affixed to the *first day of the week*; because *on that day Christ rested from all his work of salvation, and rose from the dead*.

altar with common, and not with the holy, instituted fire. An act, which, we may fairly suppose, was the effect, not of idleness nor wanton offence, but of inadvertent apprehension that this part of the jewish ritual was unimportant and indifferent. Whatever *their* ideas, however, or *ours* may be of the crime, such was the malignity of it in the sight of God, that, though they were the first priests that ever were, the sons of Aaron, and one of them his first-born, they must be cut off in a moment. *There went out a fire from before the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord.*

Samuel had appointed to be with King Saul by such a day. He failed in his engagement. Saul was then in a situation uncommonly dangerous. The *Philistine* army consisted of *thirty thousand chariots, six hundred horsemen, and common foot soldiers as the sand on the sea-shore for multitude.* His people hereon were dispirited, so that some of them fled to any thickets and pits they could find to conceal themselves: some left him, and *went over Jordan to Gad and Gilead*; and the poor remain of his army, which consisted only of *six hundred men, followed him trembling.* In this state what could Saul do? he must fight or die. And he must not begin the battle without a sacrifice. And Samuel was not come. What could Saul do? Seven days he waited for Samuel, but in vain: his men deserted apace. He must even perform the sacrifice himself. Necessity seemed to legalize it. But no sooner was the sacrifice finished,
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but Samuel appears, and tells him, *Now thy kingdom shall not continue.* He had usurped the office of a priest, and must lose his crown for it. How heinously God views sin, while we are able perfectly to explain it away!

David numbers the people; and where was the evil of it? It was to all appearance wise and politic. Nobody was injured by it. And Moses had numbered the people twice, without blame; and one of the books of the law was called *Numbers* from such annumeration. Joshua and Saul had repeated the conduct without censure. But, because David's heart herein was observed to decline towards creature-dependency, therefore, that very behaviour, which we should have esteemed not flagrant, but commendable and necessary, was regarded by the *Almighty* in so atrocious a light, that no less than seventy thousand persons must die of a pestilence, for this single act of *David*.

The example of *Uzzah* is too remarkable to be omitted. *Uzzah* was the son of Amminadab. At Uzzah's father's house the ark had been sacredly kept, for no less than twenty years. At length the son, struck with the reverence of his pious father to the ark, must needs follow it on its removal. It was laid in a new cart, and drawn by oxen. The oxen stumbled. The ark was in danger of being thrown out of the cart, and broken. Uzzah puts forth his hand to save it, and was struck dead for it. None but consecrated persons were, for some
august

august reasons, to touch the ark, on pain of death.

Job, sitting on a dunghill, and scraping himself with potsherds, stripped of his estate, children, and almost of himself, cannot fail to draw our attention. Wherefore did all this misery come upon him? He appears to have been contracting a degree of *self-righteousness*, though at the same time his *principal* dependence was on the righteousness of Christ†. For as soon as he was emptied of spiritual pride, and brought to abhor himself in dust and ashes, he was restored. The searcher of hearts beheld in him a subtil-working spirit of complacency and trust in his own worthiness: and for this, it appears, for this sin, of which many professed believers have no idea, and the evil of which many real believers are but little apprized of; for this sin, so distinguished a character as Job, like whom there was none in his time in all the earth, perfect, as far as humanity ever admits of; and upright, one that feared God, and eschewed evil, in a super-eminent degree; so uncommonly good a man as Job must, for this single sin of heart, little as *we* might think it, but *great, immensely* great as the *Almighty* viewed it, be degraded from a condition peculiarly honorable and famous, to one as mean and miserable: so mean and miserable, that the like was never heard of, except in that unparalleled sufferer, the Prince of Life, the Lord Jesus Christ.

† Job xix. 29.

Shall I note *Hezekiah's* pride, his scarcely discernible pride, in receiving the ambassadors; and the punishment, the awful punishment proportioned to the evil of it: that evil being to us incredibly small, but to the Almighty incredibly great, otherwise not to have been punished as it was? I omit this, and other sacred relations. I omit particularly that of the Prophet of Bethel, slain by lions for disobeying a commandment, from which another prophet had falsely declared his release: a commandment which only enjoined him not to eat bread or drink water in all his journey; and a commandment, which seemed now no longer necessary, when his virtue had been tried at king Jeroboam's court; where, though he had restored the king's withered hand to its pristine state, he refused to eat and drink; and, therefore, probably, thought he might safely eat and drink at a brother prophet's house, especially when a pretended heavenly *warrant* for it was produced by that prophet. I omit these cases in point, and proceed only to another, that of *Ananias and Sapphira*.

These, husband and wife, were struck dead for only uttering a *single lye*; and a lye by which no one was hurt: a lye, which had for its harmless object only the saving themselves a transitory blush. What were the circumstances of it? The Christians at that time were all of them selling their houses and estates, and bringing the whole money produced by the sale, and laying it, with all their other effects,

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at the apostle's feet. Amongst these were Ananias and Sapphira, who, like the rest, *sold their all* for *Christ's sake*, but, keeping back a part, and probably a small part, not knowing how sufficient, for the intended purpose of common happiness, a one common stock of money might be; and being asked (no doubt under inspiration) whether this were the whole produce of the sale of their fortune, answered falsely, that it was. On a sudden, without time allowed them to express or imagine a single cry for mercy, they dropt down dead. They were thus fearfully cut off, only for uttering a single untruth, and that in the very act of selling their estates, and giving, with amazing liberality, almost their *all* to Christ and his cause.

The conclusion is, no one, after these facts performed by the hand of God himself, can think, that his good qualities will bear to be contradistinguished to his bad ones, so as to cancel them. Such an expectation is opposite to all the instances here recorded. The evil of sin, of the *least* sin, in men of many and great virtues, and extraordinary piety, is here practically declared by God himself to be *astonishingly enormous*, and not to be compensated in the least degree by their goodness; because it was signally punished, notwithstanding their goodness. The worth of all the goodness of men, and of creatures far more replete than men are with high goodness, with goodness without any mixture of sin, with goodness unintermitting, without any cessation, for ever; and unremitting, with-

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out any slackness; languor, or decay, for ever; the worth of this goodness has been shewn to be *infinitely small* in the sight of God; unfit for the contemplation and complacency not only of the High Majesty of heaven, but even of the creatures themselves that perform it. Unless therefore a single particle of air can outweigh the whole universe accumulated into one mass and counterpoised with it, our good qualities, which are infinitely light, can never bear to be put into the same scales with our bad ones. The Scripture method of salvation is on a perfectly different plan. In all the types, histories, precepts, prophecies, promises, Jesus Christ is the alone mean of mercy. This mercy is every where represented as offered to us *gratis*§, without any previous regard to our good or bad qualities; because such regard (it plainly appears) is in the nature of things unable, either before faith or after it, to benefit us; and because such a *gratuitous mercy* is that alone which it becomes an *independent* Deity to bestow. This mercy is dispensed without abating the rigor of the law requiring absolute perfection. It does not overlook our imperfections and frailties, but treats them as the evils they have been represented to be, by infinitely punishing *them*, as well as our greater crimes, in the person of Christ, our divine substitute. All is gloriously harmonious in this mode of salvation: the law is not cancelled, but magnified and

§ *Being justified δωρεαν, gratis.* Rom. iii. 24.

made honorable by the Gospel. The justice of God is not violated by his mercy; but *mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace kiss each other* ||.

I shall shut up all with a very short application.

I. It is the *wicked*, they who are yet unregenerate, and in a lost condition, of whom the text affirms, that they are inclined to say in their hearts, concerning their sinfulness, *Thou (God) wilt not require it*. If therefore *we* think in *our* hearts of our sinfulness, that God will not require it, it is highly probable, if not certain, that we are in God's account *the wicked*, in a condition much more dreadful than we are prone to imagine.

II. It is most plain, from the above view of human guiltiness, that we are all under a deplorable necessity for a Saviour to save us independently of any thing in ourselves, good or bad. Let us look therefore on every moment, while we delay to use his divine merits, as a moment of everlasting peril. Instead of presuming on impunity on a thousand fanciful grounds, let us infallibly secure happiness *by Christ*.

III. Such as have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them, would do well to learn, from what has been said, the immense obligations we lie under to humility, to faith, to perpetual repentance, and to a strict, ac-

curate, and devoted life : seeing there is so much deficiency and destitution in man at the best, and so great evil in the least sins ; in sins of heart, that never came into act ; in hastiness of temper ; in dissatisfaction with the divine distributions ; in the least secular employments on the sabbath ; in any transgression of the order and rank in which providence has placed us ; in creature-confidence ; in the thought of pride ; in remaining self-righteousness ; in untruth of any sort ; and in every species of inferior disobedience. The evil of all these, joined with that of our imperfections in duty, should inculcate most deeply into our hearts the necessity at once of total self-despair, in point of acceptance with God on the footing of our own works ; and, at the same time, of unremitting, exquisite, holy watchfulness against *all appearance* of *sin*, though we should be interested by faith in the atonement and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

END OF THE SECOND SERMON.

O F G O O D W O R K S.

S E R M O N III.

L U K E xvii. 9, 10.

Doth he thank that Servant, because he did the things commanded him? I trow not. So likewise ye, when ye have done all those things that were commanded you, say, We are unprofitable Servants; we have done that which was our Duty to do.

IN this passage our blessed Lord compares all mankind to servants, and their Maker to a master; and contends, that, as it is neither usual nor decent for masters, though deriving much comfort and ease from the labor of servants, to thank them; so, when we have done all those things that are commanded us, when we have performed all duties negative and positive, to God, to our neighbor, and to ourselves, without one failure, or the least deficiency, it is highly improper for us to account
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the Almighty our debtor, or to expect the lowest thanks from him. *Doth he thank that servant, because he did the things commanded him? I trow not.*

Will a master of high dignity, an august and awful prince, for instance, thank a remote and low servant, *because he did the things commanded him? I trow not.* It will be less possible for a servant to expect an acknowledgement of those services which he is hired to do, in proportion as the distance between the ranks of the master and the servant is greater.

And, will a master of high dignity, an august and awful prince, thank his *slave*||, *because he did the things commanded him*, when all the slave can do is *unprofitable* to his master, unable in any way to accommodate, or even to please him; and when the service is only framed for the sake of supporting the slave; and when such slave could be happy in no other service; and when the service of this prince is full of honor and true nobility? Such a slave must lie under an immense obligation to such a master, or owner, for such an employment; and it would be preposterous and irrational, in the highest degree, for him to think of being *thanked* by his master.

But * *dominion and fear are with God*†: *to whom will ye liken him*‡? *And man is a worm: and the son of man is a worm: neither § is it any pleasure to the Almighty that thou art righteous,*

|| For that is the proper meaning of Δουλος in the text.

* Job xxv.

† Isaiah xl.

‡ Job xxv.

§ Job xxii.

or any gain to him that thou makest thy ways perfect: but || to keep the commandments of the Lord and his statutes is for thy good alway; it is § health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones: and † when ye were the servants of sin, what fruit had ye in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the wages of sin is death: while ¶ in well-doing is glory, and honor, and immortality. Therefore it must be preposterous, and irrational in the highest degree, for us, when we have done all those things that are commanded us, to expect, and equally improper, and every way absurd would it be for God to bestow, thanks for our performances. A life, consisting of one unbroken series of moral and humane actions, all as excellent as the law of perfection can command they should be, will not, cannot be thanked, by the Almighty. And the sentiments we are taught by our Lord to entertain of ourselves, and the language to be adopted by us, after a life of the most illustrious virtue and holiness possible, is, that we are unprofitable servants, and have merely done that which was our duty to do.

Alarming and confounding as this doctrine must be to human pride, which is ever too apt to extenuate vice, yet can it by no means justify us in petulantly resolving not to take pains to do well, because we are not to be thanked for it. Far otherwise: for servants, who never conceive a thought of being thanked, yet labor, and dis-

|| Deut. vi. 24: also x. 13.

† Rom. vi. 21, 23.

§ Prov. iii.

¶ Rom. 2, 7.

charge their duty, because they are hired for this purpose; and so should we, being not hired for this purpose, but, much more, *created*. And accordingly the servant, of whom our Lord discourses in the text, is at once *plowing, feeding cattle, girding himself, waiting at table*, and fulfilling all the business of his department in the family, and yet is supposed not to presume on the idea of the unnecessary condescension of his master's thanks, but to judge soberly and lowly of himself, as of one who merely did his duty.

The scope of the text then seems to be, that *good works, all of every kind, are to be performed and persevered in by us, and yet are not susceptible of merit*: a subject of the highest importance in forming our hopes of future endless happiness, and to mistake in which is a thing, not by divine appointment, but in its own nature, as will hereafter appear, fatal. Let us, therefore, take occasion hence to inquire into the frame and constitution of Good Works, and endeavour by that means to find out, in what manner they are both necessary to be performed, and yet unmeritorious when performed.

What are GOOD-WORKS? They seem reducible to these: REPENTANCE, FAITH, WORSHIP, JUSTICE, INOFFENSIVENESS, and CHARITY, or BENEVOLENCE: but if any thing else be called a good work, which is not comprehended under either of these names, it is presumed, that the spirit of the observations

made on *these*, will be applicable to *any other* good works.

First, then, of REPENTANCE, which may be thus defined: *an application for mercy, under a sense of exposure to punishment, mixed with a sorrow for our conduct as bad, and flowing, not only from a dread of punishment, but, from a change in the heart from bad to good dispositions and principles.* The temper of the first part of this definition, namely, to *apply for mercy, under a sense of exposure to punishment*, must be necessary, because mercy must be foreign and impertinent to, and wholly lost on, a malefactor, who is too fullen and stubborn to *ask* it; especially, when, if genuinely asked, it is sure to be obtained; nay, is already obtained. In such a case, he that will not ask, should not have, mercy.

And yet, will a prince thank a malefactor for petitioning for his life, or will God be obliged to us for asking of him salvation from hell? I trow not. And if, after all our importunities, a prince, or the Almighty should shew us favor, it will be of grace, not of debt or justice to our entreaties. All our earnestness is, nothing of the nature of merit, but only an exercise of prudence, which will not lose heaven for want of sufficient application.

The *sorrow for our conduct as bad*, which is the second part of the definition of Repentance, is also both necessary and unmeritorious. For, if not concerned for our bad conduct and nature, we are not only likely but sure to offend in the
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same manner again, and to continue only offending and never mending, for ever: a consideration which must, doubtless, obstruct all possibility of mercy.

And yet, does any one thank another, who has frequently and wilfully offended him, *rarely* for being *sorry* for it? he *ought* to be sorry; 'tis the least he can do to be sorry; but there is no merit in it.

In like manner, *a change of heart, from bad to good dispositions and principles*, must be indispensably necessary, though unmeritorious. For without this change, without a fixed hatred of all sin, which will be discovered in sincere and habitual prayer for deliverance from it; and without a radical love to all duty, and to every grace, which will be discovered in true and constant prayer for the possession of the one and practice of the other, it is impossible we should be *capable of heaven*, all whose inhabitants, pleasures and pursuits are abhorrent of sin and devoted to goodness. To enjoy an holy heaven, we must have a previous *taste* for holiness.

And yet, when we are changed ever so much, there is no merit in it. The new and good heart is only that which it was criminal for us not to have had originally, and always. There is no merit, but rather *demerit*, in only beginning that *now*, which we ought to have begun *long ago*; and, by this time, to have made great progress in it.

But, because true Repentance implies an ingenuous dejection of mind, very opposite to the
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ease and complacency which the thoughts of our *worthiness* produce, therefore, only a false and counterfeit repentance can consist with the idea of meriting by repentance. The object which repentance contemplates is, not *good desert*, but, *ill desert*.

And, that the imagination of merit is incompatible with the being of true Repentance, may also further be shewn, by applying such an imagination to each of the parts of the definition given above of repentance. For first; He that values himself on soliciting mercy, under a sense of exposure to punishment, thereby shows, that he has little or no sense of that punishment. Secondly, He that having frequently and wilfully done ill, makes a merit of the mere decency of being at length sorry for it, is not properly sorry at all. And thirdly, He that has so little feeling of the evil of sin, or of the fitness of duty, as to be capable of thinking it a *worthiness*, to begin at length to follow the one and to avoid the other, cannot yet be said to be changed in heart at all.

So greatly true is this strain of reasoning, that not our sins themselves appear to have such a tendency to keep us out of heaven, as the conceit of meriting by our repentance. For suppose a servant had often and designedly broken some valuable pieces of furniture, large plates of looking-glass, for instance, what peculiar indignation, greater than that excited by the crime, would a master feel, upon finding that his servant was tolerably satisfied with himself,

himself, merely because he was *sorry* for his wilful and repeated wickedness; and, what is more, that for the mere decency of being sorry, he expected great gifts and rewards? Such expectations, were they possible in human things, would probably provoke a master *more* than the injury he had received, and induce him more than ever to determine to punish the offender, if it was only to bring him to a proper sense of his offence. And in the same manner and for the same reason, we may suppose, that where a sinner first offends the Almighty wilfully and repeatedly, and afterwards on being penitent, so over-rates his penitence, though it makes no reparation for the damage his sins have done, as to think himself somewhat entitled to mercy, merely on account of the pitiful decency of his penitence; and not only thereupon entitled to mercy, but to the gift of heaven and eternal happiness (for there is no medium between mercy and glory; no one being able to claim the one without the other) in this case we must suppose the Almighty to be more incensed at these swelling thoughts of arrogancy, than at the sinner's crimes themselves; and, less for those crimes than for that arrogancy, to resolve to exclude the sinner from mercy, and heaven.

Secondly, FAITH is, equally with Repentance, both necessary and unmeritorious. For Faith simply means *Believing*; * *believing the record, that God hath given us eternal life,*

* John i. 5.

and this life is in his son. But no man can use an inheritance, without believing it to be his : nor can we use Christ or his benefits, without believing them to be ours. Faith then, being the act whereby we use Christ and his benefits, is necessary, if Christ and his benefits are so.

And yet, there can be no merit in Faith, in using Christ and his benefits, any more than there can be merit in using our natural eyes ; nay rather, infinitely less.

And the *imagination* of merit is incompatible with the being of true Faith ; because, where a man truly uses Christ and his benefits, it is no more possible for him to value himself for it, than for using either his sight, or reason, or fortune, or any other great mercy whatever. That man can have no true idea of Christ, and consequently no true faith in him, who is able to fancy it any worthiness to use or believe on him.

And not our sins themselves seem so likely to exclude us from mercy, as the vanity and impudence of making a merit of merely using, or believing on, a Savior. Must the Almighty not only provide a Savior, but thank us for accepting him ?

Besides, what excellence can it be to believe any thing on sufficient evidence ? what virtue to believe a being of infinite veracity, especially when the thing to be believed is our own salvation ? Is the character of God for truth to be degraded so low, that we shall boast of doing him a favor, in giving him common credence ?

Thirdly,

Thirdly, concerning WORSHIP, the same things may be proved as concerning Repentance and Faith, that it is at once necessary and unmeritorious; also, that it is incompatible with the idea of merit; and that such an idea alone will prove our Worship to be false and unreal; nay more, that such an idea tends more than our sins themselves to prevent our everlasting happiness.

The exercise of *prayer*, or *praise*, or *hearing God's word*, or *receiving the sacraments*, are each of them sometimes reputed acts of Worship.

And first, of *Prayer*. It is plainly contrary to the nature of spiritual blessings, far more than of temporal, for them to be *forced* upon us. We must *desire*, to be *capable* of *enjoying*, them. This desire immediately produces, or rather is itself, Prayer; that of the heart, though not of the lip. Consequently Prayer is necessary in the nature of things, as the ground of our capableness of enjoying spiritual blessings.

And yet it is not meritorious. For do men thank us for asking favors of them? I trow not: much less, if the favors asked be very great indeed, as salvation is. The merit is all in the *giver*, none in the *petitioner*.

Also, the idea of meriting by prayer is impossible to one that prays truly. For, because a deep-felt sense of our misery is essential to true Prayer, therefore it is no more possible for one that prays truly to esteem himself for it, than it is for a beggar, under a deep-felt sense of perishing by cold and hunger, to esteem himself

himself merely for asking relief. Our Prayers therefore can be no prayers at all, in the sight of God, or man, when we are able to think of their meriting any thing.

And, because, if we knew a beggar was admiring himself for *only asking relief*, and was thinking he did us some favor to ask it, this alone would naturally tend to prevent our giving him relief; the impudence and ignorance of such ideas being highly provoking; therefore, we may suppose, that the idea of our meriting by *merely asking mercy* of the Almighty, and so great mercy as redemption from hell-torments is, the idea of our making a favor of *asking* this at his hands seems highly provoking to the Almighty, and more so than our sins themselves.

Secondly, of *Praise*, which is necessary, because unavoidable. For a beggar, under the most deep-felt sense of want, having been amply relieved, *cannot help* feeling some sense of the benefit conferred: but such sense of the benefit conferred, is Praise; of which, voice, or language is only the dress or expression, not the thing itself.

And yet Praise, or thanksgiving, is unmeritorious. For does a benefactor thank a beggar for returning him thanks? *I trow not.*

And, because, if we felt Praise or thankfulness properly, we must naturally feel the memory of our previous distress, the relief of which is the ground of our Praise and thankfulness, therefore it is no more possible for a man to
pride

pride himself upon *true* Praise and thankfulness, than it is upon merely receiving relief. The impression of our recent wretchedness will obliterate all thoughts of *excellence*, for the mere propriety of thanking our benefactor. We shall be charmed with our *benefactor*, and not with *ourselves*: and this in proportion to the greatness of our extremity and his benefits.

And what can be more irritating to one, who has been a great and only friend to us in a great and perishing distress, than for him to hear, that we *thought much of thanking him* for it. Surely therefore not our sins themselves will so certainly procure our destruction, as the idea of meriting by our Praise and thanksgiving.

Thirdly, Hearing and reading the word of God, and that constantly, is necessary, for many reasons; because ** how shall they believe on him of whom they have not heard. Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.* Also, *† the heart of man being deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, so that he that trusteth his own heart is, saith Solomon ‡, a fool*, it is necessary that we use that important institution of a close, solemn and affecting ministry, consisting of men, who, because the bulk of their fellow-men are, and ought to be, conversant about their worldly callings, are thinking for *them*, when they cannot be thinking for *themselves*: such thinking for others, being the whole and sole destination and occupation

* Rom. x. 14.

† Jer. xvii. 9.

‡ Prov. xxviii.

of the lives of ministers ; who, for this purpose alone, are forbidden all secular cares and employments whatever ; they being, in general, previously taught, trained and habituated, in the course of a various education, to reflect coolly and carefully both for themselves and others.

And yet there can be no merit in hearing or reading God's word ever so often or constantly, any more than in using food, or sleep, often and constantly ; each being only a means provided for our benefit, and which we conform to only for our own sake and advantage. Consequently to make a merit of using this means of grace shews, that we have no right conception of it ; otherwise it would be as impossible for us to boast of our most frequent and diligent use of the Bible, as for a sick man to boast of a most frequent and constant use of medicine ; the means of natural health *this*, as the *other* is of spiritual.

And the idea of our meriting, by our only using a means which God has provided for our saving benefit, must be to the Almighty, who discovered and appointed it, an affront unspeakably great, even more than that of our sins themselves.

The same arguments will exactly apply to the fourth part of worship, THE SACRAMENTS : which, being each public acts intended only for our assurance of the divine favor, and in that manner being vehicles of grace, are, *in their own nature*, at once necessary to be celebrated,

brated, and incapable of being meritorious; all the thanks being due to the *author* of these institutions, for the great benefit of them, and none to us for partaking of them: such an idea being an insult on his goodness not less flagrant, but more so, more justly punishable, as the slightest reflection will suggest, than our sins themselves.

The same conclusion follows, also, on investigating the three kinds of Good Works, which remain yet to be considered: JUSTICE, INOFFENSIVENESS, and CHARITY, or BENEVOLENCE. They are each necessary, for the universally acknowledged description of heaven, is of a place or state, whose happiness consists in its moral excellence, or benevolence; a rooted principle in the heart, therefore, of *Justice*, *Inoffensiveness*, and, what comprehends both, *Charity*, or *Benevolence*, is necessary, if such principle is that without which we are destitute of a possibility of heaven's happiness.

And yet these virtues are unmeritorious; for what right have I to another's goods, that abstaining from them should be a merit in me? And what right have I to offend or hurt another, that I should value myself upon not offending or hurting him? Is it any merit for a man not to be a wolf, or beast of terror and prey? And where is the high excellence of giving that to a fellow-creature in distress, which we ourselves do not absolutely want?

Nor is the idea of merit possible to a truly *just, inoffensive, charitable, or benevolent man*: for,

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conceiving rightly how much he *ought* to be so, and the shame and gross impropriety of being otherwise, he will proportionally be unable to make a merit of that which is merely fit in itself, and the contrary to which is so horrid and abominable. Besides, the truly benevolent, who are always as such both just and inoffensive, think themselves *happy* to shew mercy, and to give comfort to others, and will reckon the unhappy their creditors, more than debtors, for being made happy by them.

And are we so sunk in sin and selfishness as to make a merit of not stealing, or of not tormenting our fellow-creatures, or of merely shewing kindness to them? How must this incense the Deity against our character, and add an extreme aggravation to our sins, and determine him more than our sins themselves, not to shew us mercy; especially when he considers what mutually dependent creatures are both rich and poor; and that he made all men equal; and that their fortunes are continually changing, in order to oblige men *from policy*, if not from virtue, to be benevolent to others, because they, or theirs, will themselves need benevolence in return.

Also because all moral excellence is bestowed on us for our own sake, and not for God's, therefore, every grace and virtue we can name is incapable of being meritorious, and yet is on all hands confessedly necessary, being essential to our future, which will certainly be a moral, happiness.

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The extract of all that hath been argued is, that though all Good Works are necessary in our salvation, yet are they unmeritorious: that when we have repented as worthily as our demerits require; when we have believed as strongly as the truth of God challenges; when we have prayed as fervently as our necessities call for; when we have praised God as warmly as his benefits deserve; when we have heard or read his word as seriously and constantly as its importance merits; when we have received both the Sacraments as devoutly as their nature and end suggest; when we have been just, harmless, and benevolent, as punctually, universally, and cordially as our circumstances will possibly admit of; still we are not to expect or receive the thanks of our Maker: that these Good Works are respectively not susceptible of merit; that the bare imagination of their meriting is a proof of their spuriousness; of their being only apparent, not real acts of goodness; and that such imagination contains in it an evil more offensive to the Almighty, if possible, than our sins themselves; at least is of such a nature as more than ever to bind the evil of our sins upon us, rather than to remove it.

But hitherto we have supposed our Good Works to be faultless in every respect, and altogether as good as they should be; and on this supposition have proved that man is, not merely as a creature, but from the very nature and constitution of Good Works themselves, unable to merit, to boast, or even to expect the least thanks from

God. But how much more than true, I had almost said, must it then be, that man, considered as a sinner, can have nothing whereof to glory, but every thing to fear; nothing *in the flesh*, as St. Paul speaks, whereon *to trust*, but every thing to dread. How stripped of all desert, naked and exposed to the divine wrath must he be, when his repentance is, both in manner and degree, the most contemptible, considering the occasion he has to repent; so that when he is most repentant it is so little to what it ought to be, that his repentance itself seems to provoke the Almighty afresh; add to which, that his faith in God's promises is full of hesitation, and more difficult to be satisfied therewith, than with frail human promises: that the concern or gratitude we feel for his favors, though they are immense, is less than what we shew for little good offices from our fellow-men; that our Sacraments are never so full of awe and love, and joy, as they might and ought to be: that our Justice, Inoffensiveness, Charity, or Benevolence, are unequal, inconstant, insufficient: that, besides all this, he abounds, as the best do, but too much, in sins of thought, and sins of act; in sins of speech, and sins of silence; in sins of duties, and sins in sins, that when compared with *the perfect law, which Christ came not to destroy but to fulfill*, every waking moment, as it contains, at least, a deficiency from what we ought to be, charges a new moral debt, or sin, upon us, thereby making our sins rise almost beyond the count of numbers,

numbers, at the end of every year, and almost at the end of every week or day; as David owns with a bleeding heart and weeping eye, "My sins are more in number than the hairs of my head." When we consider all these things, how just appears the severe treatment which our Lord shewed to many that were more sober, regular, decent, charitable, devout, than others, because they trusted in themselves that they were righteous: and how fit is the rebuke to such given in the Revelations: *Because thou sayest I am rich, (morally rich) and increased in goods, (or Good Works) and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, (that is, real grace, which though it enriches the possessor, yet always makes him poor in spirit, or truly humble) that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, (of Christ's perfect righteousness) that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear: and (because persons of a self-righteous cast must be blind, and almost insane, one should think, therefore it is added) anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see.*

From what has been proved above, the following things are easily deducible: First, That *his soul which is lifted up, (which must here mean with self-righteousness, because it is contrasted with being saved only by faith) is not upright in him.* He is not good, though he seem such, to a very great degree both to himself and others. 'Tis apparent, not real; false,

and not true, piety and virtue, where we are able to value ourselves thereon. Good Works have been shewn above to be unsusceptible of the thought of merit; *but the just*, such as are really so, *shall live*, shall be saved, just as they expect to be, *by Faith**.

Secondly, When the Scriptures speak of rewards, they can only speak after the men, and mean, that because where God determines to shew mercy and compassion, he always imparts repentance, faith, and a principle of universal obedience, therefore the connection of these things with the divine mercy and compassion, is as certain, as if they were rewardable. A man possessed of these things, may look upon himself as being as sure of heaven, as if it belonged to him of right. These things are the description, character, and distinguishing badge of all the subjects of God's sovereign grace; on which account, it is said, *They have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gate* (Christ Jesus) *into the city of bliss and glory*. It belongs to them, and to them only: the impenitent, unbelieving, unregenerate, or disobedient, who are not cordially and habitually concerned to keep the commandments, have no right to heaven, through, or not through, Christ.—Grace finds us mere sinners, and leaves a principle of sin, of all sin in us; so that against all sin the best have need to pray; but then it implants a principle of sanctification, which makes us want and strive to be holy, in thought, word, and work; so that where we fail in per-

* Habakkuk ii. Gal. iii.

fecting holiness, our Lord describes it thus, *ye cannot do the things* THAT YE WOULD.

Hence we see the propriety of those expressions, “Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven;” because forgivingness of injuries, being one of the fruits of an interest in Christ by Faith, such an interest may as well be described by real and true forgivingness, as by Faith itself: and for the same reason an interest in Christ’s finished and independent salvation may as well be described, as it frequently is, in Scripture, by any other gracious temper and act, or by true obedience in general, as by Faith; these being the attributes, or the quality of true Faith, as yellowness, weight, fixedness, and the like, are of gold; so that there is no interruption in the analogy of Scripture, nor any shadow of contradiction between *St. Paul* and *St. James*. A man is saved by Faith, says the former; but his faith, says the latter, produces Good Works, and without them it is a dead Faith, or no true Faith at all. Where is the opposition? Then he cites Abraham’s Faith, as that which *wrought by*, or discovered itself by, or yielded, *Good Works*. It is as if *one* should say, commodities are to be bought with gold; but, says the other, the gold must be malleable, ductile, and the like; that is only, it must be real, true gold, and not merely any thing like it. The reason of the observation made by *St. James*, plainly was the mistake of some in his days, of a merely historical Faith, or bare credit to the truth of the Gospel, which is all the faith the bulk of Christians have, for that genuine, heaven-

heaven-wrought, humble, experimental, and practical faith of a sinner feeling himself lost, and then applying to his heart and conscience the Savior's merits. *THIS Faith worketh by love*; the other, either works not at all, leaving no difference between the character of Christians and Turks, or Pagans; or else, it works on the self-conceited, groundless, slavish, arrogant, and impious principles of merit and worthiness.

Thirdly, If the foregoing arguments, shewing from the intrinsic nature of Good Works, that a man that truly performs them cannot be able to think of challenging the divine favor for them, such an idea being incompatible with the reality and existence of genuine Good Works, it will follow, that a *second* justification by works, is an expectation as absurd as a *first* justification by Works. The office of Good Works is never to justify or save; or move the Deity in our favour, but a quite different one; they being the effect, not the cause of mercy: as it might easily be shewn, that it is impossible they should be a cause of mercy, either in whole, or in part, from the impassibleness, immutability, and independency of God, and from their originating all from him, as well as from the structure and form of Good Works themselves.

From this last inference it follows, Fourthly, That salvation is not partly of Grace, and partly of Good Works; but must be wholly of Grace, and not at all of Works, as the apostle, with great exactness and force, argues: *If it be of Grace, then is is no more of Works; otherwise Grace is no more Grace**.

* Rom. ii. 6.

Fifthly,

Fifthly, From the impossibility that truly Good Works should consist with the idea of merit, it follows, that error in religion is not an indifferent thing; that certain ideas and opinions (as this of merit for instance) are incompatible with the very being of real religion, and therefore instantly decide a man's character to be bad, and his condition, at present, a lost and reprobate one. Hence heresies are called *works of the flesh*†. The notions of the judgement are important, because they are regulated by the state of the heart, and are right or wrong, as the heart is, in the style of Scripture, either spiritual or carnal. His life cannot be right, however specious, whose faith is fundamentally wrong.

Let us dismiss this subject as soon as we have confirmed it by surveying the two greatest men perhaps that ever lived, and observing, what their sentiments of themselves were, after arriving much higher than any of us, I fear, have been, at the pinnacle of that goodness which is allowed to mortals.

St. Paul is one of my instances. For, though none like him, blameless in his outward conduct, and strict in his inward tempers, before his conversion as well as afterwards; though he was honored with a miraculous conversion, and with an assumption in his life-time into the third heavens; though as a man he was remarkably upright, benevolent, and polite; as appears by his behaviour to Peter, to Festus, and to the poor; though as a Christian he was able to propose himself a pattern to

† Gal. v. 10.

others,

others, as Christ was to him; though as a minister, he felt such love for souls as was scarcely ever imagined before, wishing even himself accursed from Christ for their sakes—though as an Apostle, he laboured more abundantly, and suffered more exquisitely and variously than any other, being in deaths oft; and what exceeds all, was under all pains, insults, and wrongs, patient, and even KIND; yet still none like him, expresses an abhorrency of Good Works, and writes against them, in point of justification; none like him regards himself as a monument of the divine patience and mercy, set up for the wonder of all ages; none like him adopts such humiliating epithets, as conceiving himself to be less than the least of all good men, a wretched man, one not worthy to be called an apostle, a præternatural birth, and the chief of sinners.

The other instance which I shall produce in point, is from the Old Testament, ABRAHAM; who, though he believed God, at a time when he was a new and almost unknown God, in uncircumcision, believed so as to forsake his old native fields, house, friends, kindred, country, for the bare promise of God, going whither he knew not, and living a long time only in a tent—believed through endless delays and apparent impossibilities—though he suffered for God at the tender old age of an hundred and twenty†, a time ill-fitted for misery—suffered beyond all conception, in being commanded to take his very son, his young and darling son, and first to draw a knife across his throat, and

† *ἡ ἡλικία πολλὴ πρὸς φασὶν ἐμαχέσθαι*, says Chrysostom.

afterwards

afterwards, with his own hands, to burn him to ashes, as a sacrifice—suffered, still more, in not being permitted to sacrifice him immediately, but in being obliged to travel three days, with fluttering heart and faltering feet, to the place appointed for the sacrifice—suffered on beholding the spot, then at length, afar off—suffered every step as he drew nearer to it—suffered on arriving there—in the act of explaining to his son what he was about to do to him—in the moment of proceeding to sacrifice him.—Abraham, though he was thus uncommonly devoted with his all to God, and though he was thus strong in Faith, giving glory to God, so as to be called the Father of the Faithful, and cited as a pattern of Good Works, as well as of Faith, still, the name he assumes is only that of dust and ashes; and what is more, the Holy Ghost, who describes and adorns him, says, that the *reward* (as it is called, because heaven so amply compensated his sufferings) given him was *of grace*, of mere favour and mercy, not of *debt* or *justice*; that he was *justified* not by Works, but by the self-despairing *Faith* of a sinner in a Savior; which humbling Faith it was that wrought by, or produced, *his Works*, and that even so great a man as Abraham, *had not whereof to glory before God*†.

So likewise ye, when ye have done all those things which are commanded ye; say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do.

† Rom. iv.

END OF THE THIRD SERMON.

OF THE HOLINESS OF GOD.

S E R M O N IV.

ISAIAH VI. 3.

Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts; the whole Earth is full of his Glory.

THESE things spake Esaias when he saw the glory of Jesus Christ, says the evangelist John.—Therefore Jesus Christ is the Lord of Hosts: which being the highest title and incommunicable name of God, it follows, that Jesus Christ is truly, properly, and essentially God. Indeed as much as this is implied in the very name Jesus, which being derived from *יהו*, what is called in the Psalms, by way of eminence above all others, the name *JAH*, the same as *Jehovah*, and from *שׁוּב*, to save from destruction, means, plainly and inevitably, *Jah-Savior*, or *Jehovah-Savior*; the attribute *Savior* being added to *Jehovah*, says the angel in the act of appointing the name Jesus*, because he shall save his people from their sins.

* Matt. i. 21.

But,

But, that we might not err in a point of this high importance, the Deity or non-Deity of Jesus Christ, he is expressly called † the *mighty God, the everlasting Father*; *the man that is MY FELLOW, (my compeer) saith the Lord of Hosts ‡: the great God and Saviour of us ||*; and more strongly still, *the ONLY DESPOT §, GOD and LORD of us, Jesus Christ*. Hence we find not only the same titles, attributes, acts, worship, every thing ascribed to him equally with the Father, but the very first and admisory rite of our religion, baptism, presents with Christ as co-equal and co-essential with the Father and Holy Ghost. Go, and teach all nations; baptizing them in the name of —doubtless the true Deity—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. But, what is more, there is, as shall hereafter be shewn, an absolute necessity in the nature of things, that Jesus Christ should be, what St. Paul asserts him to be, *God over all blessed for evermore*. With which opinion concur even those texts of scripture which degrade him to man; because the catholic faith is, that he is both God and man in one person: exactly as he is represented in the story of the text, endued with a visible form, and sitting; (consequently the form was human, that to which he was ever partial) and at the same time elevated on the

† Is. ix. 6.

‡ Zech. xiii. 7.

|| For so we should translate *Titus* ii. 13. *Τῷ Μεγάλῳ Θεῷ καὶ Σωτῆρι ἡμῶν, Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ.*§ Jude, verse 4. *Τὸν μόνον Δεσπότην, Θεόν, καὶ Κυρίον ἡμῶν, Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν.*

throne of ineffable divinity, surrounded with the highest of creatures, who are all in profound abasement at his presence, and execute his orders, respecting all fates and events, through the universe.

This was the vision of the glory of Christ which Esaias saw: and the connection that it has with the holiness of the divine nature is plain: so that it is no wonder the Seraphim, when they beheld an humanity annexed to deity, and were taught the reason and necessity for it, cried out in a kind of stupor, *holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts*—it is no wonder they were retained for some space of time with only a sense of the divine holiness, so that they continued responding to each other, nothing but, *holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts; the whole Earth*, the stage on which the God-man is to make his appearance, is full, eminently full, of his glory; it will receive more illustrious displays of the glory of the divine holiness, than heaven itself ever can: for no Deity assumed humanity and actually suffered death in it, in heaven, as was done on earth. This spectacle of an incarnate God taught them that God is so holy, that while he pardons a sinner, he cannot omit shewing an infinity of aversion to sin: so great an aversion, as that, rather than sin should not be treated as the evil it is, and the accursed thing which his soul hates, he would himself suffer, and suffer the most exquisite, lingering, dying pains, under the imputation of our sins: thus pointing
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ing out the desert of sin, and the value of mercy, to be each infinite ; with many other things, which establish to all eternity the holy character of God, to his own endless honor, and his creatures endless good.

The subject then of our meditation at this time is the HOLINESS OF GOD. An attribute, which is necessary to his enjoying his supreme dominion with the most perfect approbation and confidence of all good beings ; because they can best learn how perfectly and infinitely he loves virtue, righteousness, moral excellence and benevolence, by any thing that shews his extreme abomination of the contrary : that is, by the displays of his holiness, or intolerance of sin. It was fit and right that as the system of divine government comprehends all eternity, and as many parts of this system must to finite minds like ours, appear strange, and probably suspicious, therefore some exhibitions of the divine holiness should be made, the memory of which should not be able to be lost through all eternity ; such exhibitions, as should assure us most deeply and absolutely, that what we cannot understand, or approve, separately considered, in the course of his administration, (such as the permission of such things to exist as either pain or sin) are yet considered with their relation to the whole of things fittest and best to be permitted. It was fit and right too that in the permission of the existence of either pain or sin, these exhibitions of the
divine

holiness should be such, as by their connection with the divine goodness, should shew for ever, that the character of the Deity is equally abhorrent from cruelty as from vice. Wherefore, in the plan of redemption by Jesus Christ, it may be difficult to say, whether the love or purity of God is most conspicuous. It is fit and right also that the holiness of God, or his intolerance of sin, should, as it is an expression of his love of virtue and goodness, be, like every other sacred attribute, infinite. Therefore, when in the discoveries which God makes of his holiness, or intolerance of sin, we incline to think him severe and cruel, (as the straightest stick will appear crooked in certain mediums, as in water) we are philosophically and manly to correct our passions by our judgments. We are not to suffer our settled sense of the propriety of God's being infinitely holy, or intolerant of sin beyond all the rules and limits we can assign ; we are not to suffer our settled sense of the propriety of such an infinite divine holiness to be disturbed by any appearances of cruelty therein. It is to be expected that any act and instance of a *perfect* and *infinite* abhorrence of what is evil will to us seem dreadful, and wear the resemblance of something very opposite to goodness and love.

But pass we on to contemplate some pictures of the divine holiness. Where did sin first break out? In heaven. And what marks of divine aversion attended it? They were such as we might naturally expect, from a
Being

Being of infinite Holiness. For dear and near to their maker as the angels were that sinned, being then the flower of his creation, and the first new acts which he had ever put forth of his power, wisdom, and goodness, miniatures as they were of God himself in beauty and intellectual endowments, bathing always in happiness at the fountain head, and having no other prospect for ever but of pure never-ending happiness, in the bosom of their great and fond parent, the Almighty, still, no sooner did the least particle of moral evil appear in some of them, no sooner did a single motion of pride begin to move in their minds, but all the love for them which subsisted so strongly in their friend, and father, and maker, is extinguished, not an idea of pity sways his breast, the injured rights of virtue take hold of his mind and occupy all his heart; and therefore he instantly casts them out of his presence and heaven, stripped of all their honors and dignities, orders them to be loaded with chains and fetters of darkness, as melancholy is called, and then hurls them into a furnace of fire, there to be tormented day and night for ever and ever. Neither their own exalted rank, nor all their past unsullied moral brightness, nor the tender attachment he felt to them as to an only child, could save them, or make their misery less than eternal: no! for a speck of sin even these illustrious heavenly personages must, without pity, not perish, that had been mercy, but be perishing to all eternity.

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So *holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts*; so *impartially* and *totally* a lover of virtue; so infinitely averse from, and impatient of, sin, beyond all human conception whatever.

Where next did sin discover itself? On this new-made earth. And what favor was shewn to it by the Almighty? Not more than was extended to it in heaven. No? Could it not suffice the divine Holiness to treat sin as he did in the persons of sinning angels, without proceeding to the same lengths of punishment amongst men? Shall this lower creation be marred as well as the upper? Shall both worlds be thus injured and defaced? Vain and effeminate pleas, that cannot affect a perfect lover of virtue. The simple question is, does sin exist on earth? If it does, though man seems to have been made almost to supply the place of angels; though the globe was but just now made for his superb habitation, contrived as it was, by the utmost skill, as well as goodness, of God, who took up six days to meditate what was fittest, noblest, best for him; though a canopy of mildest blue, and of many thousand miles in width, had been cast over his head, and a carpet of living green, and immense extent, had been strewn under his feet; though an orb of light, of amazing magnitude and lustre, had been formed to wait on him by day, and another of softest silver by night; though nothing was suffered to meet his eye but beauty, nothing his ear but harmony, nothing his nostril but grateful odors, nothing his palate
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but delicious tastes, nothing his touch but pleasurable objects of sensation; and though all within man was so framed, as best to improve the blessings without; still no sooner had man touched a single piece of fruit that was forbidden; no sooner had this slightest trespass imaginable been committed, but all is ruin, wrath, and death: death temporal, moral, eternal. Excuses have each of our first Parents to offer, but they are wholly disregarded. In vain it is urged, that having never committed evil themselves, they suspected it not in others, in the serpent—that *he was more subtle than any beast of the field*, and was for this purpose tenanted by a being of greater subtilty, the spirit of a fallen arch-angel, in order most effectually and infallibly to ensnare them. *Was sin committed*, is all the enquiry. If it was, then nothing is too dreadful for it to receive from the hands of absolute Holiness. And accordingly, first, the serpent, though only the vehicle of sin, and unconsciously so, was put under the divine curse: the very ground, the inanimate, harmless ground, because a sinner stood on it, was cursed; the whole creation itself was made to groan and travail in pain together until now: Woman was sentenced to conceive always in sorrow, and to bring forth in throes of anguish insupportable: Man, to drag after him a life of unceasing care and toil; and both man and woman not only to quit their Paradise with disgrace, but to suffer each every variety of pain. Our race, abandoned now by

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the fountain of virtue to its own moral sufficiency, from inferior seraph sinks into dæmon. And now suddenly rushed upon the world every kind and degree of treachery, cruelty, impiety. Evils all, both natural and moral, follow. Whence it hath happened, that even a friend, or a merely honest man, is seldom found among the millions of men. And calamities, too shocking to be described, have been perpetual from that day to this. One breaks one limb, one another; this is tortured with this pain or sickness, that with another; fractures of skulls succeed, and burnings, and scaldings to death—sometimes storms, sometimes war, or pestilence, or famine, devour thousands at a meal. Not a single moment has there been, from that hour to this, though an interval of near six thousand years, but perhaps millions, in some part or other of the world, have been feeling either painful fears, or losses, or regrets, or shame, or grief, or heart-aches, and the last agonies of mortality. And even this is not all the divine holiness, which is infinite, would inflict for man's sin; for his little sin, if one might so speak, of eating only a piece of fruit. Infinite pains alone could satisfy a principle in God of infinite indignation against sin; and therefore, not only is this earth, by its quantity of wretchedness, turned into a kind of hell, but a real hell, that prepared for the devil and his angels, is prepared for human transgression: an hell, after death, equi-during with eternity.

So intolerant of sin; so *holy, holy, holy*, is
the Lord of Hosts.

Who

Who can paint the horrors of the deluge? Bedridden age and infirmity, and sweetest infancy hanging, without idea of danger, on the breast of tender but distracted motherhood; kings, philosophers, slaves, all of every order and circumstance under the whole heaven, are reduced to perish by water—They use every artifice, but in vain; resorting to the tops of houses, turrets, trees, and hills, in hopes to escape the universal whelming destruction, but all are swept away, with ghastly looks and dreadful struggles, in one vast, undistinguishing scene of ruin and woe; out of all the countless millions of men then on earth, only *eight* persons being preserved. What a picture is this deluge of the high, insufferably high holiness of God. *Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts.*

But this scene of water is not more terrific than was that of fire, and thunder, and smoke, and earthquake, which attended the delivery of the law of holiness at Sinai. Here an unusual pomp of purity is to be expected. These laws not the children of Israel themselves are permitted only to hear, without being peculiarly *sanctified to-day and to-morrow*; their clothes, their heaven-spun, miraculous clothes, which lasted so many years without waxing old, must be washed, and, on the third day, putting them on, they were to assemble round the mount, but not to touch even the border of it, on pain of death. Nay, *if so much as an irrational beast touched the mount, it was to be stoned or thrust through with a dart*: all teach-

ing us that *God dwelleth in the light of holiness, to which no man can approach.*

Nor less display is made of this attribute, when God sets up the public form of worship for the Jews. The high-priest must not presume to enter on the exercise of his office, without being first remarkably hallowed. Only on this occasion, a young bullock and two rams were to be sacrificed. Then he and his sons must wash themselves with water. Nor till this purification was undergone, might either of them put on even the garments of religion. Many other rites equally amazing and expressive of the divine purity, ran through the whole Levitical institutions. For instance: even he that led out the scape-goat, and he that burnt the flesh, or the skin, or even the dung of the goat that was slain, must wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in water. Nay, the mere touch of a vessel was sometimes polluting, and not the reading of the Bible itself was allowed, without an insperion of atoning blood. But what seems more than all, was, that from the rigorous holiness of these ceremonial laws, even a sin of ignorance, was either to be tremendously punished, or animals must lose their lives, and be immolated to atone for it. One should suppose that faults committed without any vicious intention, and by accident, could be no great crimes; but these laws, considered as typical, teach us far otherwise, that for a sin, even of *ignorance*, the atoneing blood of Christ is necessary. *Holy, holy,*

holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts, above all human or angelic ideas, infinitely holy.

We must not omit the testimony of every human conscience to the divine holiness. For though we labor ever so much, suffer ever so much, and study to be and to do all we ought to do always, still conscience pointing us to the character of God, enlarges its requirements, as our payments are more and better, and marks to our minds our deficiencies the more strictly and minutely, as they are the fewer in number, and less in quality: so that the best of men feel painful suspicions of miscarrying to all eternity, for evils which they cannot persuade worse men are any evils at all. So greatly true is this, that nothing but a hope grounded on principles of perfect holiness, such as that on Christ's perfect righteousness, can fully satisfy an awakened sinner's conscience; nor can even that, in general, satisfy his conscience; for he can hardly dare trust to it, though all-sufficient and of divine appointment, without improperly adding to it some fancied merits of his own.

Thus not only the world around, but the world within us bears witness to the consummate Holiness of God. If, however, we will but attend to one instance yet remaining, we shall want no more to constrain us to cry out with the seraphim in the text, that the divine intolerance of evil is overwhelming and ilimitable. It is an instance of the divine severity against sin, where we should least of all expect to find one, in the midst of his *mercy,*

It is an instance of his severity against sin, shewn upon an innocent person ; upon one who lay in his bosom from everlasting, upon one who was actually one with himself, upon the immaculate Jesus, who though so divine a person and so innocent, yet assuming the character of the representative of sinners, and guilty of sin by imputation only, must yet not only suffer, but infinitely, from the hands of infinite Holiness. No mercy was for Jesus Christ, when once he appeared in the quality of a sinner ; all his Father's bowels were hardened against him, all his Father's *ingenuity*, if I may so speak, was exerted to make his punishment amount to infinite. That punishment must be the last that could be inflicted, that of death ; and that death must be the most base and infamous one—the *Cross* ; and previously to his being led thither, he must be banded about, first from one court, then to another, and then back again, and treated with every circumstance of contempt and offence possible, from all orders of men ; from priests and rulers down to the lowest rabble, and profanest soldiery. He must be scourged with such lofty strokes, as *made long furrows* in his back ; so that he himself calls it, *plowing* upon his *flesh*—he must have filthy phlegm spit in his sacred face ; his head must be violently struck with a cane ; his eyes must be blinded, and then he is to be asked, while some are smiting his cheeks till they swell again, and others are plucking off his hair by handfuls, to prophecy, *who it was that smote him* :

him : he must be insulted in the very article of dying ; when, as before, such was his emaciated appearance, *that you might tell all his bones*, so now, what with the phlegm and blows, and what with the blood, which the thorns fetched from his temples, the Prophet says, his countenance *was marred, or bruised, and more marred than any man's* ever was, or will be. In this manner, at length, he is hung up, and nailed by his hands and feet to the Roman gallows, like one too bad to be endured on earth ; and, like a transgressor, was he thus executed with transgressors ; and, as the chief, placed in the midst of two malefactors crucified with him. But even here, if one drop of supporting consolation fall upon his sinking nature from his heavenly Father, it would be all tolerable ; he could have gone with some little vigor through the six hours of slow execution : but no ! he is obliged to cry out, and to cry out *in vain—My God, my God, why hast THOU forsaken me ?*

Was the divine hatred of sin equal to this ? Could it carry him through this train of punishment unheard of, though the object of it was Jesus Christ himself, the God-Man ? And, though the sins were none of his own, only imputed to him ? How *holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts.*

But almost a greater instance of the Holiness of God than this, is left for our consideration : and that is, when God, after having taken this
 vengeance

vengeance for sin on the person of Jesus, in the stead of his people ; and, after having worn away, as we should have thought, all his iron rods and scourges, upon the body of Christ—after having thus gratified his wrath against sin to the full, cannot yet behold any sin, or backsliding, in his people, without visiting it on *them*, in their own persons, in *this* life, though not in another. Christ may be the representative of his people, and suffer what he may, in their stead, to do away the *guilt* of their sins ; yet, if they err from duty, if they decline to the world and folly, they shall be brought back by *chastisements* ; they shall be, to sense and appearance, for a while, dreadfully cast off by their God and Father ; abandoned to horrors and doubts insupportable ; or, what is far worse, to a *progress* in their declensions and apostacies ; and, though saved at last from final ruin, yet, only so as by fire. How *holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts : the whole earth is full of his glory*. Heaven has felt his holiness, by the loss of a vast number of angels, and by the immolation of Christ ;—earth has felt it, from its first creation, and will to its conflagration ; and hell has, and will feel it to all eternity.

What improvement should we make of this awful subject ?

First, it is manifest, that a sinner's wisdom lies in getting an interest instantly in Jesus Christ ; *out of whom God is a consuming fire*, and, *in whom*, he can be just and holy, in justifying a sinner that believeth on the Savior.

Secondly,

Secondly, How *safe* is a sinner that avails himself of Christ's holy method of salvation. The very Holiness of God is responsible for his eternal safety, because it hath received the payment due from us, by the bleeding hands of Jesus Christ, our representative.

Thirdly, What little licence can any doctrine pretend to give to the least unholiness, in the sight of all this infinity of Holiness, in our great Observer, and last Judge. *Stand in awe, and sin not; commune with your own heart, and in your chamber, and be still:* be full of meditation, full of supplication, full of faith, to be kept from sin, and full of dread at any occurring opportunity, or temptation to sin.

Fourthly, It may naturally be supposed, that the people of God, they who will really be with him to all eternity, must *cordially approve* this Holiness of God, as the *glory* of his character: else, how can they *praise* God. Hence it is, that the true people of God have a principle, which, though much thwarted, in this mixed state of things, both from within and from without, yet cleaves to Holiness, as the element alone in which it can be happy, and loves Holiness wherever it is to be met with in others, esteeming them more, in proportion as their spirituality is greater.

Hence it follows, that an habitual want of love to Godly persons, and a disapprobation of the eternal punishment in hell, which God threatens against sin, are both of them certain marks of having yet no interest in the divine favor.

favor. For, had we such interest, we should cordially approve that hell, which his infinity of Holiness enkindles; and also, loving *him*, should infallibly love those who are *his*, or who resemble him.

To conclude: let us never forget, but profoundly and practically remember, that the *Lord our God is Holy*: that we are to expect his Holiness, displayed in the *government* of the world, should be equal, and not inferior in quantity, to his wisdom and power in *creating it*: and that all we can see of his Holiness, is, like all that we can see of his wisdom and power, when compared with the whole stock which he possesses of either, but as *the hem of the garment of his ways*, as Job expresses it; or, as it is expressed in the vision of the text, it is only as *the train* of his robe; a part, and the *inferior* part of it; that which sweeps on the ground; this alone *fills his temple above*; how little, therefore, can, by any means, be known of it in his temple *below*. All we can say, or think, is, not how *greatly* holy is the Lord of Hosts; but that he is, something inconceivable, holy, holy, holy.

END OF THE FOURTH SERMON.

OF THE GREAT MORAL LAW.

S E R M O N V.

R o M. iii. 19.

Now we know, that what Things soever the Law saith, it saith to them who are under the Law : that every Mouth may be stopped, and all the World may become guilty before God.

THE Apostle in this place cannot be speaking of the *ceremonial* Law, but of the *moral*. For having, in the preceding verses, given a general description of the character of man, of both Jews and Gentiles, in the text he makes an observation upon that character; and, therefore, the Law spoken of must be such as may apply to that character; which can never be said of the *ceremonial*, but only of the *Moral* Law. Besides, by the law here in question, it is said, *comes the knowledge of sin*; and *by it every mouth is stopped, and all the world brought in guilty before God*. And again, this law

law is *not made void, but established*: things which can never be affirmed of the ceremonial, but must belong to the moral, Law.

Let us, therefore, consider, first, *the nature of the Great Moral Law*, to which we are all subject; and, secondly, *what inexcusable sinfulness it charges upon us all, so as to stop every mouth, and to render all the world guilty before God.*

First then, *what is the Law*, under which we are all made? And here it is curious and important to observe, that the Law which the Scriptures reveal to man, is just such an one as the deist himself, from his own principles, might expect it to be, a system of *benevolence*, and nothing else. A defender of revelation need only beg one question, that *God is love*, or *perfect benevolence*, and then he may prove, that the Law, which such a Being will give to his creatures, will be just such an one as the Scriptures describe; that the *penal sanctions* of that Law, and the divine method of mercy, must be what the Bible teaches; nay, from this very principle being granted him, he may prove (what one should not easily imagine) the *trinity of persons in the Godhead**, and the scriptural character of human nature, and every other doctrine contained in that book, which claims to be THE WORD OF GOD.

God is a pure benevolence. This is his nature; and, therefore, his Law, and all his actions to all eternity, must be according to, and the result of, benevolence. He cannot possibly propose any rule to his creatures but

* See the next sermon.

that of benevolence. How pleasing is it, to find this *priori* conclusion agree most exactly with what our blessed Saviour delivers to us. *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.* On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. All the law is fulfilled in one word, (says the Apostle Paul) *Thou shalt love; for love worketh no ill to his neighbor.* And the true love of our neighbor will make us heartily conform to all the laws of personal temperance, truth, modesty, and to every duty which seems calculated, as those laid down in the Scriptures are acknowledged to be, for the general good of society. Also the true love of our neighbor, is immediately connected with the love of God. For, whoever is truly benevolent himself, esteems all others who are so; and that in proportion to their benevolence; consequently, he will love God in the highest possible degree, because he is *infinitely good*, or benevolent. Thus benevolence, or love, the true, and comprehensive, and noble idea of which seems effaced from the human mind, comprehends all religion and virtue. It is the whole of the law delivered to man.

Such a law, therefore, as this, is that alone which a Being of perfect love and goodness could set up; because it is not only that alone which his benevolent nature could dictate, but it is that alone which contains all moral excellence and beauty in its precepts. For we cannot

not conceive of *any higher*, or *any other*, moral excellence, or beauty, than that of perfect love, as described above. We know not of any higher or any other moral excellence or beauty than this, either in God himself, or in his creatures. How worthy then of the Supreme Being, its author, is this law; for the obedience it requires would immediately fill us with, nay, is itself, all the moral excellence and beauty, of which our natures are capable.

Such a law as this is the only one to be expected from the Almighty, on another account; because it immediately and essentially conveys *happiness*, as well as excellence and beauty to his creatures. Nay, they cannot be happy by *any other* means than by this. For, first, *love*, which is the essence of the Law, is a temper of mind, which, be it exercised about what creatures it may, rational or irrational, or about what objects it may, pictures, statues, music, flowers, or any thing else, always in the act of exercising itself upon its respective object, is attended with pleasure and joy. Pain may attend the pursuit, or the loss, or the damage, of what we love; but still love is in itself immediately pleasurable, and pain only a contingency to the circumstances of the object of our love. I need not add, that all, who know what true benevolence to man is, will confess, that it is *full of delight*; that the pleasure felt by the truly benevolent, in *bestowing* happiness, is, at least, equal to that of *receiving* it. As our Savior's favorite maxim says, *It is MORE BLESSED* (that is, more happy) *to give than to receive.* Neither

Neither can happiness consist with *envy* or *malice*, which, as such, *essentially* partake of *pain*. Neither can *society* be made happy, but by a spirit of benevolence perfusing the several parts of it. A society, composed of members destitute of benevolence, would soon destroy itself. Thus, when God enacts a law, he does but *teach us to be happy*, both in *ourselves*, and in our *social* relation to each other. How worthy such a law of the Supreme Being! and particularly, considering what has been said of the *reverse* of this law, how impossible is it that he should devise any other. How amiable is he in his character of a *law-giver only*! How fit to rule, and to enjoy dominion over all creatures for ever! What a felicity is it, that the throne of the universe is filled with such a Being as God is!

But still more glorious must God appear, in this his benevolent legislation, if he annexes such sanctions of promises and threats to his law, as shall most certainly tend to secure its fulfilment, and thereby to put mankind, to all eternity, in possession of all its advantages. See then such very sanctions as these which his *benevolence* teaches us to expect, annexed to this law. See the *greatest promises possible* annexed to the performance, and the *greatest penalties possible* annexed to the violation, of the law. No greater blessings or miseries than these, which are, both of them, eternal and infinite in degree and duration, *could* God himself bestow or inflict. And blessings, or miseries, not less than these, not less than

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infinite

infinite and eternal, might we reasonably expect from the benevolence of God, in order to give his law the most certain operation, and utmost and happiest effect. So that the eternity and infinity of hell-torments, and of heaven's glories, are both of them equally founded in the nature and benevolence of God, and of his law. And thus while the constitution of heaven's glories is merely and plainly the result of God's benevolence, the constitution of hell-torments also is the result of the same *benevolence* of God, and not so properly of his *justice*. The torments of hell, as well as the glories of heaven, were dictated by the infinite benevolence of God, as the only fit sanctions to enforce a law of infinite benevolence, and happiness. And, because these sanctions were fit and right to be *imagined* and *declared*, so must they be to be *executed*. The execution, like the first imagination of them, must flow from the benevolence of God. Indeed, this might be proved another way. For, if God loves benevolence infinitely, he must hate its opposite infinitely; and be disposed to act accordingly; that is, to punish it infinitely; and therefore without pity, or relenting, to all eternity. So that in hell, where the transgression of the law of benevolence is punished thus by the Almighty, there is a proportional, that is, an infinite, display made to the universe, of the infinity of the divine benevolence. Wherefore, in the language of St. Paul, *the ministration of DEATH is glorious*; or, as he speaks in the next verse, *the ministration of*
CONDEMNATION

CONDEMNATION is *glory*. There is a divine lustre of goodness therein ; as well as, though less than, in the scheme of salvation. How worthy the Supreme Being, its author, is HELL ITSELF ! How lovely his universe ; all whose *worst* part is *so good* ; all whose horror is beauty, and all whose punishments, goodness !

But does the law of God require absolute perfection ? It does, for these reasons, amongst others. Because none but perfect benevolence is competent to the design of perfect human happiness ; and because we cannot suppose God able to publish any law, but one of *pure virtue* ; that is, of perfection ; and, because, in one sense, none but *perfect* obedience can be *true* and *real*, or any obedience at all. For, if we do not *perfectly* love any one, so far we do not *truly* love him. The chasm, the deficiency, the incompleteness of our regard, would not exist, if we truly loved him at all.

So we frail men expect perfection from our fellow men ; or, where it is wanting, suspect the reality of their virtue. Thus we expect a *Judge* to be *perfectly upright* ; a *servant* to be *perfectly honest* ; a *subject* to be *perfectly loyal* ; and where either of these, respectively, are not upright, honest, loyal, there we impute blameableness ; which can only be, because the law in our minds demands perfection of each other. And where a Judge is not *perfectly* upright, if he only fails in *one* instance, and in the *least* degree, of uprightness, we naturally hesitate to call him upright. We suspect whether he can

have any true cordial principle of uprightness in him at all. And so of the rest. But to instance in the spirit of the law. A man cannot properly be benevolent, that is not *perfectly* so; that is, *with all his heart*. There must be no *indifference* in benevolence. To exist at all, it must be *complete*. *Grudging*, which is one species of imperfection of benevolence, is not consistent with *generosity*. We must do good *with spirit* to be truly benevolent.

From this proposition follows another, that all deficiency from the strict perfection of the law is *sin*, or *coming short of the glory of God*, as St. Paul expresses it; and, therefore, every the least inadequateness to the high demands of the law deserves, and is exposed to, the *penalty* of the law, or eternal destruction. Of this but few people are aware: otherwise, inexpressible terror must be supposed to prey on mankind, as will be seen hereafter. And the great refuge which *the many* have on this occasion, to secure themselves from an infinite accumulation of guilt, arising from a sense of *at least* perpetual *deficiency* and *imperfection*, is, that the law requiring perfection is *repealed*, by Jesus Christ; and a new one, accepting sincere, though imperfect obedience, is set up in its stead: than which nothing can be more unsupported by Scripture, or more foolish in itself; and even *useless* to us, as shall now be briefly shown. Let us, first, see why the perfect law can never be repealed; and, then, why no milder one can be substituted in its stead.

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By a Moral Law, we understand a declaration of what rational creatures ought to do. And that declaration is, that we should truly and supremely love our Maker, who is truly and supremely lovely; and that we should love the whole human race, so as to do to them, as we wish they should do to us: and this not dryly, and by constraint, but upon the enlarged principles of universal benevolence. Now, can ever any situation occur, in which it would be *improper* to love God supremely, and to be benevolent to man? Will not, must not, this be always what we *ought* to do, how much soever we fail in it? And, therefore, can God himself say as he would by repealing this law, that we *ought not* to love him and our fellow creatures; that the obligation and reasonableness, of our loving him, and our fellow-creatures, was at an end? God himself cannot, therefore, repeal a law like the moral one, whose foundations are laid in the unchangeable perfections of his divine nature, and in the eternal reason and fitness of things.

Neither can God himself dispense with the original, infinite *penalty* of the law, which is hell-fire. For, to remove the *sanction* of the law, would be to weaken its *authority and effect*; and, so far, would approach to removing the law itself. But if not; if the penalty of the law was originally founded (as it doubtless was, or it would never have existed in the divine imagination) in the unchangeable perfections of God, and in the eternal reason and

fitness of things; that penalty can no more be dispensed with, than the law itself can. Happy for us, unspeakably happy, that, in the Christian scheme of salvation, but in no other whatever, there is no occasion to make either the attributes of God, or the Great Moral Law, or the penalties thereof, to *fluctuate*. The god of infidels may be an unsteady being, and his law of virtue, and its penalties, variable: but not such the God of Christians. Infinite reason, the more we reflect, the more we shall be convinced of it, infinite reason is on the side of revelation, and all beyond is only imagination in the stolen garb of reason.

But if, Secondly, God cannot *repeal* his old law of perfection, then neither can he substitute a *milder*, or *any*, law in its room; for this would be repealing it. And, therefore, Jesus Christ cannot be come to declare a milder, remedial law, accepting imperfect obedience, if sincere, instead of the original debt of perfect obedience. For this would make our imperfection itself to be perfection. For that imperfection being perfectly as much, and as good, as this supposed new law requires, would be a perfection of obedience to it. And thus this imperfection, being hereby made virtuous, and perfectly virtuous, (for it is adequate to the highest demands of this new Moral Law) the oftener we commit such imperfection, the better. And all sense of blame for these lesser faults is false, self-contradictory, and vain. These *faults* are *virtues*, for which we are entitled to
praise;

praise; and not *errors* which deserve *censure*. To say the least of this law, it tolerates and licences imperfections and lesser sins: a law how wickedly charged upon God!

Besides, there is no room, no opportunity, or footing, for this *new* Moral Law: because salvation by Jesus Christ is provided for all such, as, with all their imperfections and guilts, will embrace it; and on the very principles of the *old* perfect Moral Law: which will be more largely seen in the next discourse, *concerning the divine Mercy*.

Having now slightly surveyed the great Moral Law, to which we are all subject, let us *compare ourselves* with it; and thus see, what was our second proposition, *what inexcusable guilt it charges upon us; so as to have that effect attributed to it, in the text, of stopping every mouth, and of rendering all the world guilty before God*.

And to this we shall be led by considering an objection, which the apostle Paul very naturally supposes may be laid against the propriety of the law; namely, by being so perfect, the law is weak and ineffectual to save, or to govern man; and if God foresaw this, why was it ever enjoined? This circumstance seems to make it unlikely that any such law, with such sanctions, should ever have existed. Not so. For it was fit and right that the rule of *what ought in reason to be done*, should be published; otherwise, we could not know what was virtue or vice: especially, as this rule of *duty* was

the only rule of *happiness*; of happiness both personal and social; and of happiness both among ourselves, and in God. And it was fit and right that men should know how to estimate the evil of breaking this law, and the worth of keeping it, by adequate sanctions. These sanctions are the best way of showing the real turpitude of moral evil, as it appears to God; that is, as it is really in itself. By this means alone men would know, what judgment to form of the character both of God, and of themselves; and of the relation they bear to him; and by this means alone men could know both their *need* of a Savior, and the great *value* of one. And this last is the express use which St. Paul assigns to the law. *Wherefore then serveth the law**? It was added, because of *transgressions*; (and with immediate reference to Christ) till the *seed* (Christ) *should come, to whom the promise was made*: not as though it was then annulled, but fulfilled, on the coming of Christ. Again; the very publication of the law implies its *non-fulfilment*. For had man continued innocent, he wanted, and had, no Moral Law, but what was written on his heart. It was when man fell, and when the knowledge of our duty, and what was sinful, was obliterated in man, that the Law was written on tables of stone.

Was *the Law added because of transgressions*? Would it never have been *engraved*, but for *transgressions*? And is its use to *stop every mouth*,

* Gal. iii.

and to *render all the world guilty before God?* Then we may consider, first, the *quality* of our sins, then their *quantity*, and withal their inexcusableness. And for an explication of these, the text points us to the nature of the *Law*.

Now, let any man compare himself with the Law he is under, *To love God supremely; to love him with all the heart; and this, not out of fondness, or partiality, or necessity, but with all the mind; that is, from the fullest instruction and approbation of the understanding, or judgment; and this, not in one respect only, or for a certain time only, but with all the soul; as long as a man's soul or self exists; and this, notwithstanding any occurring difficulties or temptations, and with the utmost stretch and exertion of our bodily powers, as well as spiritual, with all the strength.* And let any man compare himself with that other commandment, which is wisely said to be *like* unto this, because it goes on the *same principle*, namely, *Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself*, and how will every mouth be stopped, and all the world appear to be guilty before God. For who is there who performs either part of the Law? Who is there that loves God supremely; and his *neighbor*, all who are *nigh* him, all with whom he ever has any connection, or of whom he has any knowledge, as much as he regards himself? In either of these points, who can say, *I am perfect?* But if not, then *our mouths must be stopped*; we can have nothing to plead in arrest of judgment. We have broken the Law,
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and confess it ; and, therefore, nothing remains but for the great Judge of quick and dead, to pass on us the sentence of the Law. Nothing remains but for us to be cast into hell-fire, there to be tormented with the devil, and his angels, for ever and ever. This ruin is ours, if we have broken the Law in *one instance* only ; as one instance, in which we are convicted amongst men, is sufficient to expose us to the respective sentence annexed to such conviction.

And how just is this ! For what is implied in breaking this Moral Law of God *only once* ? That we are creatures who at that time were capable of putting aside the Supreme God ; of rejecting both him and all the consideration of universal happiness partly depending on our conduct : that at that time we were creatures capable of preferring our own little, momentary care and pleasure, to the durable and eternal felicity of the whole world, which depends on virtue ; that at that time we were creatures capable of preferring vice to virtue, and the creature to the creator.

How execrable, viewed in this light, must the quality of sin, of one transgression of the Law, appear ! How execrable must it appear to a Being, who justly challenges all our love, and who is himself infinite benevolence, to see the interests of virtue and benevolence, in any one act, trampled on, and their opposites honored. Who can imagine how detestable an appearance only *one sin* must make, in the sight of God ?

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It must surely to him be *infinitely* detestable. Of which, to conceive more easily, let us suppose there was but one breach of this law ever made; and that all the beings in the universe were perfectly benevolent; and that nothing but moral excellence and happiness, of God in all his creatures, and of all his creatures in God, had ever existed. What unutterable horror, and amazement, and dread, would all the beings in the universe feel to that one creature, who was capable of such an act as SIN. How would they shrink from him, and tremble at him; and judge, that for the common benefit he ought to be made a due example of; and that virtue and every thing sacred required his destruction. What exquisite revenge would benevolence itself, as such, feel at the violation of its rights, and the insult of its laws, in the person and act of such a sinner. How would it demand ample satisfaction and reparation in the execution of the sinner; and what pleasure would the amiable angels themselves take, in beholding it as a necessary sacrifice to the honour of benevolence, goodness, purity, virtue†. And how would the sinner, if he had one spark of honor and justice left, approve his own condemnation, and, covered with blushes inconceivable, submit to this general detestation, and otherwise adequate punishment, as to a thing barely fit, and every way right in itself.

† So they actually appear to do in Rev. xix. 1, 2, 3.

The *penalty* of the Law has been proved to be infinite, and therefore the *bad quality* of *sin* must be infinite to *deserve* it.

To offend a bad Law is proportionally no crime, but to offend a Law very good in itself, and on which much, *very much*, depends; (as the happiness of a kingdom, suppose) must be bad indeed, and proportionally; that is, in this case, infinitely bad, where the order, beauty, and happiness of all the human race to all eternity, is broken up and destroyed, as it is by sin. So then the quality of one sin is bad beyond all limits; which might be shewn in a large variety of other respects. For the consideration that duty is happiness, happiness our own, and that of others, would aggravate our sin. And the consideration that there must be great strength in sin for it to exist at all, strength sufficient to break through the greatest threats, and to despise the greatest blessings, would aggravate our sin, and would make it natural to inflict on us those threats which we despise, and to refuse us those blessings which we neglect. And the consideration of the dreadful nature of *example* in sin would aggravate it. And the consideration of the *unsocial* nature of sin, as that which opposes all creatures, both their being and well-being, would aggravate our sin; with ten thousand other circumstances, which, like the qualities of matter, can never all be fully known by us. So that whatever measures we apply, to determine the bad quality of only one transgression of the Law, we must

must remember, that the real badness of that quality exceeds them all. We must have more enlarged faculties before we can form a *tolerable* notion of the malignity of sin.

So far then the effect of the Moral Law is to *stop our mouth*, and to make us all become *guilty*, or justly exposed to punishment, *before God*, on account of the evil quality (which it demonstrates) of sin.

But the same effect will accrue from considering the *quantity* of the sin we commit against the Law, of which quantity, as well as quality, the Law is our rule in judging. For, comparing ourselves with the high spirit of this Law, we shall probably appear guilty not of one single short-lived breach of it, but of a continual one, and never once to have acted and felt, with a nobility of virtue, equal to the great and glorious requirements of the Law, either respecting God, or man. For, let any man seriously enquire, whether, in the course of his whole life past, he has even once loved his Creator with such an extatic delight in, and adoration of, him, as agrees to the degree of love to God, prescribed to us in the words, *with all the heart, with all the mind, with all the soul, and with all the strength*. And let him enquire whether he has even once loved his neighbor, every neighbor, all that come nigh him, or of whom he has any knowledge, as much, as greatly, as he then loved himself—losing sight of himself, in the consideration of others, and the *general good*. If not, if we
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are conscious of no such exercises of love to God and man, as are of this pure kind and elevated degree prescribed by the Law, then, at every moment of our lives, we are chargeable with deficiency from the Law, with transgressing it, and are as often and afresh subjected, to its eternal and infinite penalty of hell-fire.

Say not this law is too high for man, and only fit for angels; for it was calculated to make us, what we were while it existed in Adam, little lower than angels, and crowned with glory and honor.

And the better the Law would have made us, by keeping it, the more inexcusable a breach of it must be. Yes, strange as it may seem, yet not more strange than true is it, that in every moment of our life, since we attained the adult use of reason, as we have not therein been what God in his Law commands us to be, we are, without having committed one gross act of sin, only in point of deficiency and imperfection, sinners; and so often thereby have continually and afresh devoted ourselves to destruction. Calculate the sum, then, of a man's guilt only *for a month, or week, or day*, and reflect what condemnation may naturally be expected by a sinner, who has sinned so repeatedly, and so *wilfully*, as in this case he must do; and consider how much thus the *Law stops every mouth, and renders all the world guilty before God*. We could have nothing to say in arrest of judgment for *one sin*; but, sup-
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posing we could, yet scarcely for a repetition of it; but supposing we could, yet scarcely for a third, but certainly not for a thirtieth, much less for a thousandth and ten thousandth repetition of it. It must be impudence in the extreme, and boundless arrogance to imagine it. Considered only with respect to the Law, it becomes us never to hope for a possibility of mercy, but to be as satisfied of our damnation as we are of our existence. We must be satisfied that our damnation too must be, like our guilt, very accumulated; especially, if we remember also, that the aggravations of the sins of—each succeeding moment, do not simply, but *progressively* increase. So that in each succeeding moment the character of man must be that of—what will not easily be credited, but what must be true, if the preceding arguments are so—a monster of perpetually augmenting horror, (like the growing visage of Alecto* when she looked at Turnus) in the eyes of all perfectly good beings in the universe, and much more in the sight of him, the God of virtue, whose name and nature, whose law, whose heaven, and (I had almost said) whose *hell*, is love!

Here we shall leave man, for the present, totally, and merely, lost and undone, and that (as *we* might think from reason, without the assistance of revelation) without a *possibility* of mercy, so long as God is, and is the glorious Being he is.

* In *Virgil*, *Æneid*. 7.

END OF THE FIFTH SERMON.

OF THE PROVISION OF MERCY.

S E R M O N VI.

ISAIAH lxiii. 5.

I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered, that there was none to uphold; therefore my own Arm brought Salvation to me, and my Fury it upheld me.

THE former part of these words describes the miserable condition of man, previously to the constitution of a Savior, exactly as he was left in the preceding discourse, destitute of merit, and full of demerit, and exposed naked to the divine punishments, without possible help from any created being. Nay, what is far worse beyond all comparison, even *God himself* could afford him no relief. The very *benevolence* of God, which constructed the Law, by which he is condemned, and the penalties of the Law, to which he is devoted, is in arms against him. Neither could God him-
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self entertain a thought of mercy to such a character as a sinner, to all eternity.

Where then is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Let them suggest, if they can, a possibility of the divine favor to man, consistently with the glorious unchangeableness of the nature and law of God. Let them contrive, if they can, (without the help of revelation) a system of mercy, which shall imply no lenity in God to sin, but co-exist with the most extreme severity against it. Let them attempt, without christianity, to speak clear, certain, rational peace, to a troubled conscience under musings like these.

Miserable being that I am! I look *upward* to God, and see there nothing but a most pure and perfectly virtuous Being: I look *inward* upon myself, and see there a character possessed of *sin*. How opposite these to each other! How mutually impatient, and mutually destructive of each other, must my sin and the divine purity and virtue be. And how sure to be worsted am I, in contending with my Maker. I look *around*, and see there nothing but creatures, that fulfil and adorn the end of their creation: beast, bird, fish, reptile, insect, all subserving the purposes to which the law of instinct directs them. How must these creatures reproach and condemn *my* sinfulness and contrariety to the law of *my* creation. Conscience, reason, passion, are all so many aggravations of my criminality; because they have all been strongly employed for my restraint from

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sin, and for my preservation in goodness; but all have been resisted, perverted, and injured. My passions were addressed with the strongest motives possible, of infinite terror on the one hand, and infinite happiness on the other; but these, like reason, and the perpetual monitor placed within me, conscience, have been defeated in their virtuous destinations, and despised. And this has been so *perpetually* my behavior, though free from grosser external vices, that, in no one given moment, have I been that beautiful moral agent which I ought to, and might, have been. So that for every hour of my life, since arrived at the knowledge of good and evil, I have, for the deficiencies of every particle of time in that hour, many thousands of guilts imputable to me. Scores of thousands of guilts imputable to me every *day*, and hundreds of thousands of guilts at the end of every week. To calculate the sins of *months*, and *years*, and *scores* of years, would so oppress me, that I could no longer reflect on either my own guilt, or the possibility of salvation. *Salvation!* Impossible idea! The rights of virtue, and of all the universe, infringed by sin, forbid it. *Salvation!* Impossible idea! For who shall presume, or if presume, who shall be able, to intercede for me with the Almighty. Angels, like their Maker, abhor sin, and therefore, like him, can conceive no compassion for a sinner. But, if otherwise, still intercession would be impossible; because the thoughts of goodness in God must be much *earlier*

earlier than in any of his creatures ; neither can he need, that mercy should be *dictated* to him by any one. Besides, his infinite and glorious aversion from sin must prevent all rising of lenity in his sacred nature. Neither can my *misery* excite the divine *mercy* ; which mercy, being attended with pain, though a generous one, and implying change, though in mortals a lovely one, is impossible to Deity, which can neither suffer, nor vary. Neither can Deity be wrought upon, or agitated, or moved, by any motive, or object, from without. Let me reflect, what help can arise from the consideration, that my sinful nature was not incurred by my own personal act ; and therefore the exercises of that sinful nature may be partly excusable. This plea indeed might avail me, if I received that sinful nature at first, or conformed to it afterwards, *reluctantly*. But alas ! I find sin *too pleasing* to me ; or, otherwise, I should not indulge it. And whence-soever comes sin, I know, that *God* cannot be its author. And as this is the original structure of my mind, to regard sin as blameable, let it spring whence it may ; and as, accordingly, I blame my fellow-creatures for their respective faults, without adverting to their origin ; therefore, I should naturally expect to be dealt with according to this constitution, as it were, of my moral sense. But will not *repentance* avail me ? Alas ! it does but imply the being of guilt, and reproaches me for having *occasion* to repent. Neither will *amendment*

serve me ; for the new course I am taking, is only that which I ought always to have been pursuing ; and my virtues are poor miserable inconsistent things at the best, and incapable of meriting, if perfect ; when brightest, unworthy so high a thing as the *divine* complacency and regard. Wretch that I am, whither shall I turn for hope and help ? From no where does relief seem *possible* to me, if the Deity *could* entertain a thought of it ; and such thoughts the ineffable perfection of his love to virtue and to benevolence seems for ever to exclude. Perish I must. Ruin eternal and infinite must be mine for ever.

In this situation the text supposes *some great Being* to meet with man, and surveying his total helplessness on every side, to resolve concerning him, that *his own arm should bring the salvation to him*, which man wanted, and *his fury*, his high zeal, and irrepressible ardor, in the work of this salvation, *should uphold him*.

Can the deist imagine *who* this Being is, and by what means this salvation is produced ? The Gospel is a world of wonders, far above human contrivance. Let us survey some of those wonders.

But First, it may be objected, that according to the above reasoning, no thoughts of mercy to a sinner, considered previously to the constitution of a Savior, could to all eternity rise in the bosom of God. Therefore thoughts of mercy, by the Gospel itself, are precluded. To this it may be answered, that the acts of the divine
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mind are all simultaneous, or *present*; and, therefore, though *we* conceive of man's misery previously to the constitution of a Savior, God does not; but views both, and all other objects and events, under the same *focus*, if I may so speak. *We*, for the sake of ease and distinctness, have, but the Almighty cannot have, ideas like those of *past* and *future*. Thus, if a scheme can exist, wherein the *self-moving* divine goodness can, without suffering any alteration, and without injuring his law, reach a sinner; if a scheme can exist, wherein no perfection of the holiness and justice, and virtue of God, will be mutilated, but all be equally honored, in man's salvation, there arises no objection thereto from our *human* method of conceiving of man's misery *previously* to the constitution of a Savior.

Blessed be God for JESUS CHRIST, in whom a method of holy and honorable mercy* is discovered, enough to fill all heaven with wonder and adoration, through all the endless years of futurity. A method equally replete with *wisdom*, as with holiness and love. On which account, because difficulties to our imagination insuperable, are all by him gloriously overcome, he is called WONDERFUL, COUNSELLOR, and the WISDOM of God. On account of which difficulties, also, as to us they must appear, and immense ones too, the text represents the

* Properly speaking, there can be no such thing as what we call *mercy* in God, that being a *passion*, and therefore usually stiled *compassion*; but, as the objects of *human mercy* are *misery* and *guilt*, therefore, when the *self-moving goodness* of God is conversant about the *same* objects, it is called the *Mercy of God*.

dispensation of Mercy as a system, wherein the *zeal of the Lord of Hosts* is displayed to so great a degree, as, from its strength and vigor, and vehemence, to be called *fury*. So that on the threshold of this subject, we see that God will shew, that his gifts shall be bestowed, though at, humanly speaking, *his great cost and pains*.

Let us contemplate then the plan of grace, and behold with infinite gratitude, awe, and pleasure, how the obstacles, *the great mountains*, as it were, therein, *before Zerubbabel became a plain*.

The idea of IMPUTATION is struck out, as that which might, if properly managed, correspond with the divine perfections, and with the Great Moral Law, both in its precepts and penalties, in favor of a sinner. But how shall man's guilt be imputed to *another*? and to a *foreigner*? and to an *innocent* being? And how shall the *merit* of an *innocent* person be imputed to a *guilty* one? And where shall *merit*, a thing impossible to any *creature*, in earth or heaven, be found? And who can perform a righteousness *for another*, all creatures being fully engaged in duty for themselves? And, if not, what righteousness can be found so immense and high, as shall be an adequate substitution and equivalence for the righteousness of all human creatures to all eternity? And what atonement so inconceivably great can any *creature* make, that shall be a sufficient compensation to God, to the universe, and to virtue,
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for the evil of sin, and be tantamount in worth to the personal sufferings of all the millions of the human race in hell-fire for ever? These, and various other, impediments arise, which seem to make this, which is the only *possible* way of saving man, an *impossible* one. Besides, how *strange* is the very idea of *imputation* in itself; and how unnecessary was it, to make an *occasion* for it. For, if God had determined to bless, either all mankind, or a part of it only, as in the case of angels, why not have kept all mankind, or the elect part of it, *standing* and *sinless*, while the rest fell, as in the case of angels?

All these obstacles shall be taken away. And, First, What, if the character of God, his infinite *love*, as well as purity, and the honors of virtue, could be declared in no way so strikingly, so sweetly, and so infinitely, as in a plan of *imputation*? What, if herein alone, God could shew his *goodness* to be as *God-like* as it is? That he was capable of being good, and of blessing his creatures, at the expence of his very *life*? That his love was immense enough to lead him to *suffer any thing* for his creatures? That his love to them was even *unto death*? What, if these things could be shewn only in a scheme of *imputation*? What, if these ideas were necessary to raise and to support the delight of the universe in their great Father and Friend, to all eternity? What, if by *means of* the scheme of conveying blessings thus through *imputation*, while the mere and
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absolute *goodness* of God was discovering itself *in heaven*, and the *severity* of God against sin was discovering itself *in hell*, this *earth*, midway between the two other worlds of heaven and hell, was contrived to discover an equal and infinite *temperament* and *mixture* of the *goodness*, and of the *severity*, of God?

What, if all these, and ten thousand other benefits, accrue to the universe from the plan of salvation by imputation? And, what, if, it being certain that God, to have blessed elect men, must have kept them, like elect angels, standing and sinless in their own persons, what, if he ordains that they shall stand and be righteous in some great common head and representative, and not in their own persons; exactly as, foreknowing that men would fall in their own persons, he ordained, that they should fall not in themselves originally, but in a great common head and representative, Adam? Viewed in this light, there appears nothing strange in the idea of imputation, not the least impropriety in it whatever. And considering the above advantages which flow from such a contrivance, which must, otherwise, have been detained from, and impossible to, the world for ever, there is all the reason and fitness we can require, besides a boundless glory of goodness, in such a contrivance.

The above manner of considering the ground of imputation, takes off a natural objection to it, namely, How can the valor of an hero be imputed to a coward; or the wisdom of a philosopher

losopher to an idiot; or the virtues of the obedience of Jesus Christ, to a sinner? For that sinner would never have become such, but would have been kept standing and righteous, had it not been for deriving greater good, by his being first suffered to fall, and afterwards restored, by a righteous substitute. Besides, in common life, no objection is taken to one man's personating another, with mutual consent; as in the case of paying a debt, which, if discharged in our name by another for us, is fully and naturally imputed to us, as if we had ourselves discharged it. The instances of one man's representing another are perpetual, and nobody starts at them. And the instances of nobility and wealth, flowing out upon a remote posterity, from the public services of an ancient progenitor, are also perpetual, and justifiable. Thus our receiving heaven, and the divine favor, on account of the performances of a great character who represented us, is a thing in itself very natural; especially, on taking into the account that we ourselves should, otherwise, have been enabled to have performed our own virtues and duties ourselves*.

Imagining then the great obstacle that lies in the way of man's salvation, from the objectible

* This does not detract from the merits of Christ, for two reasons; first, *our* righteousness could never have been *divinely* human, as it is now; and, secondly, though the ground of our insertion into Christ to *stand in him* was the predetermination of God to have otherwise kept us *standing ourselves*, still as we were *not* kept standing ourselves, *but fell*, the merit is wholly Christ's, and not ours, except by pure *imputation*.

absolute *goodness* of God was discovering itself *in heaven*, and the *severity* of God against sin was discovering itself *in hell*, this *earth*, midway between the two other worlds of heaven and hell, was contrived to discover an equal and infinite *temperament* and *mixture* of the *goodness*, and of the *severity*, of God?

What, if all these, and ten thousand other benefits, accrue to the universe from the plan of salvation by imputation? And, what, if, it being certain that God, to have blessed elect men, must have kept them, like elect angels, standing and sinless in their own persons, what, if he ordains that they shall stand and be righteous in some great common head and representative, and not in their own persons; exactly as, foreknowing that men would fall in their own persons, he ordained, that they should fall not in themselves originally, but in a great common head and representative, Adam? Viewed in this light, there appears nothing strange in the idea of imputation, not the least impropriety in it whatever. And considering the above advantages which flow from such a contrivance, which must, otherwise, have been detained from, and impossible to, the world for ever, there is all the reason and fitness we can require, besides a boundless glory of goodness, in such a contrivance.

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nature of imputation itself, to be removed; still who can be his representative? Who can perform a righteousness capable of being imputed to man? No angel can, if he would, perform a righteousness for another; nor any other creature whatever; because the law of their creation fills up all their ability with their *own* duty. But if not, who can perform a righteousness fit to be substituted in the room of that of all the human race together to all eternity? And who can endure sufferings equivalent to those of the thousands of sinners themselves to all eternity? Plainly no *created* being is equal to the task. *I looked then* (says Jesus Christ in the text), *and there was none to help, and I wondered that there was none to uphold; therefore my own arm brought salvation to me, and my fury it upheld me.*

Jesus Christ, being not a *creature*, but the *creator*, was equal to the task, provided, what seemed indeed impossible to be done, he could be made *subject to the Law*, or capable of acting and suffering, in man's stead. But he was, as God, incapable of suffering, and equally incapable of obeying. For who could be *his neighbor*? and how could he love God as another person, when he himself was God? So then, it seems, the idea of imputation must be relinquished, and man must perish. For, though enduing Jesus Christ with such a capability of representing man, he would, by his performances, be able to merit, being not a creature, but a Creator, doing what he did,

did, voluntarily, without the least *obligation* thereto, and by goodness derived from himself alone; and, though as the Creator, he would not need himself the rewards he merited, but might devolve them on others, on us, (as old Barzillai did on Chimham*, whom he substituted in his room) still was he totally and essentially *incapable* of representing man, and, therefore, of either suffering, or meriting, for him.

Insuperable as this impediment must seem to any finite understanding, behold the Lord Jesus Christ overcomes it. Though incapable of sufferings, or subjection, he frames to himself a new and wonderful capability of both, by ———strange to tell!——the assumption to himself of an human nature: not the angelic, though more excellent, but the *human*: because this was the nature in which sin had been committed: this was the nature whose miseries were to be sustained, whose duties were to be performed, and on which the blessings of his representation were to be entailed. To this human nature, both subjection to the Law, and the sufferings of it, were possible; and because Deity would now be united to humanity, the grandeur of the person of Jesus Christ would make his sufferings, though temporary, yet of infinite worth and value, equal, at least, to the eternal and infinite punishment of men themselves in hell, and able, as much as that punishment itself, to declare the infinite evil of sin, and the divine abomination of

* 2 Sam. xix. 37.

fin, and his equal love of goodness. And, on account of the same grandeur of the person of Jesus Christ, his obedience would, though finite, in point of duration, be infinite in price and merit, and every way adequate to a substitution for man's own perfect obedience.

But, supposing that thus by the framing a new character, a character like to which none other ever existed; a character, which is neither that of a creator, nor of a creature, but both conjointly; supposing, by the elevation of a God-man in the universe, most, if not all, the preceding hindrances were removed, still another rock remains, which is surely impassible to the Savior, in conducting us to happiness. For, in this œconomy of imputing Christ's righteousness to the sinner, and the sinner's guilt to Christ, however sufficient Christ may be to expiate the one, and to perform the other, for man, still being God as well as man, he must, in his performances, make, with infinite toil and pains, the *payment* of duties *to himself*, and, in his sufferings, also, must make *expiation* *to himself*, which is absurd. He must live and die a substitute and sacrifice to God, as if he himself were other than God, when he himself is, and for the work of salvation must be, *God*.

Behold then the resolutions of grace not impeded in their progress even here. Behold the august Godhead itself arranging itself into offices, and assuming suitable parts and names in our salvation. One of the persons in the God-
head

head takes to himself the stile and rank of FATHER, sustaining the dominion, and challenging the rights of God and virtue. Another suddenly calls himself THE SON, representing the elect human son, and presenting his vicarious atonement and righteousness not to himself, but to the Deity considered as collected, for this purpose only, into the Father. Another, from the particular department he accepts in this scheme of mercy, ranks third, being neither the receiver, nor the paymaster, if I may so speak, for man, but the applier of the benefits of both to man, called from the nature of his operation, THE HOLY SPIRIT, THE COMFORTER.

All is not yet removed to make the imputation of Christ's perfect righteousness to us possible. For supposing the Deity of Christ, connectedly with an human nature, was able thus, on an arrangement of the Godhead into offices, at once to make atonement and fulfil righteousness, and to make both acceptable and availing for man, yet still, how can such an human nature be framed? For if the man Christ Jesus is created suddenly, and placed on earth, like Adam, he would not be *related* to men, as Adam was to his posterity; he would be a kind of *adscititious man*, a *foreigner*, and scarcely of our race, which is continued and widened by an universally allied propagation of the species. And, on the other hand, if the man Christ Jesus is not thus created, he can never exist at all;—for, if born, he must be born
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in the course of common generation. In which manner of birth he would be a descendant of Adam, our sinful head and representative, and so must have been considered as formerly included in him, and by this means must have been BORN IN SIN, *and conceived in iniquity*. Sin of his own, then, and a sinful *nature* too, being devolved on him by this means, he could never have been a righteous substitute for us, or indeed have been perfectly righteous at all. And thus would he have needed atonement for himself, and not have been able to make any for others. Behold then the expedient of divine wisdom; Jesus Christ shall neither be born thus by generation, nor created, and placed on the earth a man at first, like Adam; but his manhood shall be a pure foetus formed by the Holy Spirit, and laid, and afterwards nourished, in the womb of a pure virgin; by which means he would be born of a woman, and so a man related to men, without being a sinful descendant of sinful man.

Now then we should imagine, that every difficulty which the divine mercy had in reaching man, in the scheme of imputing Christ's righteousness, was surmounted. But, alas! *another* difficulty subsisted, which seemed to frustrate all that had been before contrived for our redemption. For such and so deep is the apostacy of man from God, such the stupidity of his understanding in divine subjects contracted by sin, such his immense aversion to
true

true holiness, and to God ; such his immersion in the cares and concerns of earth, that make an offer of mercy to him, though provided in this costly way, and he will have no disposition thereto : no sense of ruin without it ; no inclination to be brought back to God, for all his happiness to consist in him. He *can see no form nor comeliness* in this adorable constitution of a Savior, and so cannot desire, or delight in, him. He *refuses to hear the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely*. And, if God should *incline* man's ear to his own salvation, still he cannot make him *persevere* in his attachment to it. He cannot make him habitually adhere to holiness ; man will recur to his own fallen *nature*, and thus all will be lost in the plan of mercy, for want of a possibility of *conveying* it to man.

Behold here the resource of the Almighty. Behold the Holy Spirit engaging to fulfil what that name implies, to man : engaging to be a New, and *Holy, Spirit* of moral life in man. A divine principle that shall actuate the subjects of grace to all eternity : a well of water, as our Savior calls it, from its purifying effects, *springing up unto eternal life*. That Holy Spirit undertakes to quicken the conscience, to convert the heart, to renew the man ; and thus makes way for the natural, easy, and eager reception, and admiration, of Jesus Christ, as the wonderful Savior he is : and thus by the perpetuity and continuity of his influences shed
on

on the human mind, creates him a second, a spiritual, and holy-loving nature, for ever.

Thus the high way was prepared in the wilderness for our God and Savior, to the equal and everlasting honor of all the divine persons and perfections, and of the Great Moral Law, and of all its precepts and penalties: a plan that fills the capacious minds of angels with wonder, so that it is said, *Which things the angels desire to look into.*

One or two short reflections shall finish this subject.

First then, what a proof is this perfectly moral, and holy, and virtuous method of mercy, of the truth of the Holy Scriptures. No religion in the world but the Christian thus provides for the interests of virtue and the honor of God, in dispensing favor to man. All other schemes are repugnant to the divine nature.

Secondly, we here see, that without a *Deity* of Christ, and a *Trinity* in the Godhead, salvation was impossible. God himself, otherwise, could not have saved man when once fallen.

Thirdly, what a picture of the *unity* of the Trinity is here seen in their each conspiring to one end, as if that Trinity consisted, if I may so speak, of one soul, or self.

Fourthly, here is observable the folly of believing we have yet any interest in God's mercy through Christ, if we are not subjects of the Holy Spirit's quickening, humbling, and re-
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newing operations, enabling us to desire Jesus Christ as the pearl of great price, and disposing us to prefer comfort in God, to all which an empty, showy sinful world has to give.

Fifthly; Has Christ's *arm* thus *brought* the *salvation* to *him* which we needed, and has *his* *fury*, his vehemence of love and grace, thus *upheld* *him*, how inexcusably guilty will our sottish blindness be, if we do not see him as the altogether lovely; and since the merits and blessings of this salvation are open, night and day, for any one, who feels himself perishing without them, to use and be happy, how shall we escape, if we neglect so great, so immensely great, and glorious, a salvation.

Now to the Triune God, our Redeemer, *be* *glory* *in* *the* *church*, *by* *Christ* *Jesus*, *throughout* *all* *ages*: *and* *let* *all* *in* *earth* *and* *heaven* *say*, *Amen* *and* *Amen*.

END OF THE SIXTH SERMON.

OF CHRIST, THE SECOND ADAM.

S E R M O N VII.

R O M. v. 14.

Who is a Figure of him that was to come.

IT is undeniable matter of fact, that we have corrupt natures. All records, ancient and modern, sacred and profane, every where proclaim it; insomuch, that the history of the world is little better than an history of sin. Whence is this state of things? How came we to be thus corrupt? And at what point of our youth did this corruption first *commence*? We can trace sin, and the effects of sin, pain, disease, and death, up to infancy, and the first moment of our existence. So that universal fact verifies, what the Scripture asserts, that *we are born in iniquity, and in sin did our mother conceive us.*

But is not this a strange œconomy, that all men should be produced into the world *sinners*, with a greater proneness to evil than to good; so that no activity, no vigilance, no discipline
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are necessary to our doing wrong, all which, and the grace of God besides, are necessary to our doing right? Is it not to be greatly wondered at, that the great moral governor of the world should allow such a scheme as this, of all men being born sinners? How shall we account for it? Where shall we learn its origin?

The holy Scriptures inform us, and no other book upon earth *pretends* to inform us, of the source of this dispensation. They teach, that the Almighty appointed the first man Adam to be a federal head and representative of his whole posterity: that we were included in his behavior, and our salvation and destruction, or whether God should fill us with goodness, or abandon us to our own wretched selves, was poised on Adam's conduct: that he sinned, and we were thereby ruined.

A way this of *accounting* for our being born sinners, which seems more extraordinary than that sinful birth itself. For why should the Almighty include all mankind in Adam? Indeed nothing *can be unjust which God does*; because, where creatures *have no right* to any thing, they can be *deprived* of none; and so *cannot be injured* by the Creator. But what *reason* could induce the Almighty to contrive such a plan as this of representation? There was certainly no reason for it in the nature of things. For it was neither necessary for our salvation, nor for our destruction. It was not necessary for our salvation, because it did not

answer that end ;—nor for our destruction, because that would have happened as well without, as with it, by only leaving each man to himself, one by one ; for then each would have fallen and ruined himself, as will hereafter be shewn. No creature can be trusted to keep himself ; but, though furnished with conscience, reason, hope, fear, or any other the strongest principles and motives whatever, will certainly fall, if God himself do not keep him. What then could be the divine intention in setting up Adam as an head and representative of us his children ? It should be such an intention as would justify itself the moment it is declared. It should be such an intention as is for the *good* of man, and not for his hurt : such an intention, as should make every man satisfied, and pleased with, and under great obligations to thank God for, the headship and representation of Adam.

The text acquaints us with the gracious and merciful intention of our falling, not in our own persons, but in another, in Adam ; exactly as the preceding sermon states our standing, or being made perfectly righteous, not in our own persons, but in another, in Christ. The text acquaints us, that the great end which God had in view, in inclosing us in Adam to fall in him, was, that thereby as soon as man existed, there might be set up a public figure, and picture, of the way of man's recovery ; how we are to be saved by Jesus Christ, and in what manner ; and how we are
to

to know *our particular* interest in him ; with many other truths, which it is of the last consequence for us to learn, as shall hereafter be shewn. The text acquaints us, that Adam *was a figure* (τυπος *a type*) *of him that was to come*. And as all types were, therefore, by analogy, *this type* was, constructed for no other end, but to be what their name and use imports, *a figure* of Jesus Christ. Now, if the event would have been the same ; if it can be proved, that we should not have stood in our own persons, though born innocent, but should certainly have fallen, it should then be *indifferent* to us, whether we fell in Adam, or in ourselves ; but if our falling in Adam will be of great advantage to us, so as to contain a model of our restoration by Christ, it is a thing greatly to be preferred and desired, that we should fall thus in Adam, and not in ourselves. This most early, and striking, and universal method of teaching us Redemption ; this plan of making those sinful natures, with which we are all born, themselves contain an *engraving*, as it were, of the only possible, holy and honorable way of restoring them, is a device worthy the divine goodness, which not only *provides* for our relief, but for our *easy* and *perfect knowledge* of that provision.

I shall take up a little time in proving that the event of every man's fall would have been the same *without*, as *with*, this constitution of things ; and then endeavour to show, that this type was, not like most others, framed only to

inculcate the atonement, or the righteousness, of Christ, but also every other great doctrine in the Christian system; so that, by attending to this one type alone, we may see all we ought to believe and be, and whence it is to come, under one view. An effect which may be not only valuable to us in these last days of time, when almost all Christendom seems sunk into the dregs of heresy, schism, enthusiasm, and infidelity, but must have been peculiarly valuable to our first parents, and to all in the first ages of the world, as that which might partly supply the want of that full light of the Gospel, which is vouchsafed to us now under the completion of the canon of Scripture.

First then, I am to show, that the event of man's fall would have been the same in a *personal* trial of each of us seperately, as it is in this of a representative. For *one* sin would have made such a fall; and therefore, if through a thousand ages we had continued sinless, and *then* had sinned, through all the eternity to come we should have been ruined. Now who does not tremble at the thought of such a trial of his virtue as this, in which any the least *thought* of sin, or the least deficiency of duty, had been fatal. It was only the falling of one spark of pride upon them, which blew up angels. Thus, because if probationers in our own persons, we should have had our eternal happiness or ruin depending upon nothing less than our *eternal* and universal obedience; but in Adam all our probation depended on only his abstaining

staining from a single piece of *fruit*, therefore it was *less* likely that *we* should stand than *he*, in the proportion of the difficulty of the test in the *one* case, to the ease and inconsiderableness of the test in the *other*. Therefore, in that proportion, if *he* fell, *much more* should *we* have fallen.

Could *the tempter* so easily over-reach Adam? Then certainly with *greater* pains and longer-practised arts, he would have over-reached *us*. To form some idea of this, let us recollect how much difficulty; if I may so speak, the *man Christ Jesus* had to escape from his seductions. *He was heard, in that he feared*, says an apostle, concerning Christ: which was so greatly applicable to Christ's sufferings in the wilderness, where he was tempted, that, in that school, says the same apostle, he learned how to *pity*, as well as to *succor, those who are tempted*. Such danger was even Christ in, from this Tempter, that he was obliged by it to hang in such an extraordinary manner upon the divine strength, in a way of uncommon faith, vigilance, and prayer, as to *fast forty days and forty nights* together, during all the space of his trial in the wilderness.

Was Adam so easy a prey to Satan, and was Christ himself, considered only in his human part, with such difficulty saved from his temptations: then, how certainly may we conclude, that in a time of trial long as that above described, namely, an eternal one, *we* should each have fallen;—especially when we consider, that

our motive to perseverance would be only that of our own eternal welfare, but that of Adam's perseverance was as much as this on his own account, and also as much again as this on the account of each of the countless millions of his posterity, whose welfare was all poised on his single obedience. If *such* an immense motive could not preserve *him*, much less could an infinitely *weaker* one preserve *us*.

But without offering these reasons, it seems certain *a priori* from the goodness of God, that the foreseen certainty of our own personal fall could be the only ground of our insertion into Adam; into whom the Almighty would never have put us to fall, if we should otherwise not have fallen, but been always righteous and innocent in ourselves. Indeed to prove this to us beyond a doubt, seems to be the divine intention in the frame and form of Adam's fall; which was effected by not his own original act, but by means of a temptation prepared by Satan for him, and which was also effected by means of a feather, a straw, a toy, an apple, any the least temptation whatever.

The inference, by the way, deducible from the events being thus proved to be the same, whether we were or were not represented by Adam, is, that, because the ground of our insertion into Adam, to fall in him, was the foreseen certainty of our otherwise falling in our own persons, therefore, we ought to consider ourselves, in point of *blame*, as not deriving a sinful nature *from Adam*, but *from ourselves*.

selves. We ought to consider ourselves as having been born innocent, and, by a flow, wilful act of disobedience, forfeited the divine grace, and incurred eternal misery. For this *would have been* the case, had we not been put into Adam; and this alone could be the ground of our ever having been put into Adam. Thus, though our sinful natures disable us from repenting, believing, obeying, yet are we *blameable* for not repenting, believing, obeying; because it was, as it were, by our own flow and wilful act and deed, that we incurred this inability. Hence it is, that for this among other reasons, reprobates, at the last day, can never charge God with not having given them grace and power to do well. For, virtually speaking, such grace and power all have had, and abused; such abuse alone being the ground of their inclosure into Adam's fallen headship and representation. On any other ground but this, it is impossible to justify any such headship and representation at all.

Come we now to consider how Adam *was a figure of him that was to come*; and how all the grand doctrines of Hope and Holiness are comprehended in this figure.

We were ruined by the demerits of another imputed to us, as much as if we had actually done the bad actions of that other person. So we are saved by the merits of another imputed to us, as if we had ourselves actually done those good actions of that other person; which was the exact doctrine of the last sermon, and shewn there

there to be the only way, in which, consistently with the interests of virtue, the immutability of the moral law, and the perfections of the divine attributes, man could be saved. Thus, what was there *argued* only, is here drawn and painted out to our view in a type. Our ruin in Adam depended in no sense upon *us*; for, though it was certain we should have fallen, if tried in ourselves, yet here was a chance of our standing in him. So that every way our ruin in Adam was independent of any act of ours; for we were not then born. He acted by no instructions from us; but, though our representative, acted according to his own pleasure, and thus, by sinning, destroyed us. We were wholly absent, uninterfering and passive in our own ruin by Adam: not a stroke was put to it by *us*; all was done and finished by him, when, and before, we came into the world. Neither can any thing be added to, or taken from, this damnation; it is every way complete. No acts of our own goodness could set aside, or affect, this our perfect destruction in Adam. He eat of the forbidden fruit, and we were thereby lost; he being, by covenant, our head and representative.

In this very manner was Adam *a Figure of him that was to come*. For our salvation depends in no sense upon *us*: salvation is done and finished for us, independently of any act of ours; for we were not born, when Christ, the Second Adam, stood up, and represented, and saved us. We were wholly absent, uninterfering, and
passive,

passive, in our own salvation by the Second Adam; not a stroke can therefore be put to it by us; all was done, and finished by him, when, and long before, we came into the world. Neither can any thing be added to, nor taken from, this salvation: it is every way complete. No acts of our sinfulness can set aside, or affect, this our perfect salvation in Christ. He forbore to eat of the forbidden fruit, and, according to stipulation, we are thereby saved for ever, he being *our* head and representative.

So we read, that *the works were finished from the foundation of the world*; which works being such as infer *rest for the people of God*, must, and, according to the reasoning of the context, do signify the works of salvation, Christ's atonement, and righteousness. *It is finished*, said Christ upon the cross, scarcely meaning what we could hardly expect to hear him then speak aloud for us to hear, unless it related to us, that merely his *sufferings* were finished; but that then, in act and form, was finished, what from the foundation of the world had existed in the divine mind, the atonement for our sins. And *the children not being yet born, neither having done good or evil, it was said, Jacob have I loved. In Christ ye are complete. Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by him all that believe are justified from all things. The gifts and callings of God are without repentance; for I the Lord change not, therefore the sons of Jacob are not consumed. Christ alone,*

alone, and of the people none with him, has trodden the wine-press of his Father's wrath. He hath FINISHED transgression, and made an END of sin, and made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in an everlasting righteousness. He is entered into the holy place, having obtained ETERNAL REDEMPTION for us. Thither the fore-runner, even Jesus, hath now entered, in our room and behalf. He is our peace, who hath made peace by the blood of his cross. He is the SURETY of the New Testament. Ye are become dead to the Law, by the body of Christ. Being justified by faith without the deeds of the Law. Now the righteousness of God without the Law is manifested. Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth. He that is entered into his rest, hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. As by the disobedience of one man many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one man shall many be made righteous. As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive; that is, as the next verse says, they that are Christ's; they that were represented by him; these shall be saved by him, in the one case, as they that were represented by Adam, were ruined by him in the other.

Secondly, Adam is a Figure of him that was to come in another sense. For as they who were represented by Adam find the fruits and effects thereof in their consciences, understandings, hearts, lives, and natures, and are unable to account for the corruption of all these, but by referring them to Adam's fall, so the
great

great and equal, and equally indisputable, proof and effect of our inclosure in the representation of Jesus Christ, is the *spiritualization* of our consciences, understandings, hearts, lives, and natures; the conscience is quickened, the understanding is enlightened, the heart renewed, the life purified, the nature sanctified, in all those who were interested in Christ's suretyship and saving federality. And where this effect is found, the inference is as just, and the proof as full, that, by virtue of the behavior of Christ, we are saved perfectly, and eternally, and independently of any thing in ourselves, good or bad, as the inference is just and the proof full, that, upon having found a corrupt nature derived to us, we were once included in Adam. The effect in either case is ascribable to no other but such respective cause. Wherefore, though a man have occasional stupefactions of conscience, blindness of understanding, coldness of heart, sinful intervals of life, and a remaining corrupt nature, so that, because *the flesh lusteth against the spirit, he cannot do the things that he would*, still, nevertheless, there is a principle of new sensibility in the conscience, of new light in the understanding, of new desires in the heart, of new actions in the life, and all this, in the general, so habitually and prevalently, as to amount to a new nature: And thus, notwithstanding perpetual changes and imbecillities, he has yet the mind which was in Christ Jesus, in the one case, desiring to be holy and to make up all his happiness in God, just as in the other, he

he has the mind which was in Adam on the fall, inclining to sin and earth for happiness, and leaving the Creator, the fountain of living waters, and hewing out cisterns, broken cisterns of creature-comforts, which can hold no water. God *abandons* man in the fall, but *seeks* and *restores* him here in part, and hereafter in whole, in the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. So that where such spiritual desires and affections of hope or fear spring up in the soul, as have a tendency to bring it back to God, there God is seeking that soul, and thereby it is declared, that that soul in particular was saved with an everlasting salvation, when Christ stood up and obeyed for man. Thus is there possible, in our present corrupt and mixed state, a proof of our having obtained mercy, as clear and full, as that we ever incurred wrath. A man may know whether he is in Christ, as well as whether he was in Adam. And thus the great doctrine of the *assurance of sins forgiven* is established, amongst all the other master doctrines of grace, by this *Figure of him that was to come*.

Thirdly, Because, if *some men only* had a corrupt nature derived to them from their birth, and others not, we might naturally imagine that these last could never have been represented by a fallen head, not suffering the effects of such a fallen headship, therefore we may with equal reason conclude, that they who have not this regenerate nature derived to them, which is the effect of Christ's representing any, were not represented

presented by him. That be such Calvinists or Arminians, Christ did not live and die in their room and stead. They are not of the number of those *many*, who by *the obedience of Christ were constituted righteous*. Where repentance, faith, and a principle of universal obedience, which struggles for dominion notwithstanding many present lets and hindrances; where these are wanting, 'tis ignorance, 'tis presumption, to imagine, that Christ lived or died for us; or that we are under any other head at present than our original one of sin, wrath, and ruin, the First Adam. As it is written, *if any man BE IN CHRIST, he is a new creature; and if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is NONE OF HIS*. Thus we see how, though a man be saved long ago by Christ without any dependency on, or respect to, his good or bad works, still, obedience and good works always follow, and flow from, a previous and independent interest in Christ; and thus are as connected therewith, as if they *preceded* such interest, and were the cause of it.

In these several particulars, how does Adam's federal representation figure out that of Jesus Christ, and what a fund of saving doctrine is contained in this type! We have hitherto seen in it, that man is saved, if at all, by Christ alone. That nevertheless, *except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*. And, therefore, that Christ did not die for all, because not for the unregenerate: so that though
a man

a man is not saved FOR piety and goodness, yet cannot he be saved without them*.

Fourthly, Is the derivation of a new and spiritual nature, a proof to me of my having been represented by Christ the Second Adam? And are there some, who, not being regenerate, were therefore never included in Christ's representation of sinners? Then the question is, *who made me to differ?* Who put me into Christ's representation? It could not be my own act; for I did not exist, nor was conferred with on the subject, any more than it was my own act that I was originally included in the first Adam: either inclusion being alike done anciently, without my consent or privity. Who but God could insert me into Christ, and through him convey to me a new nature? So we read, *ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you that you should bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain. If we love God, it is because he first loved us. I have chosen you out of the world. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ hath chosen us in Christ, before the foundation of the world; that we should be holy, and without blame before him, in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ, unto himself, ACCORDING TO THE GOOD PLEASURE OF HIS WILL.* Indeed so it must be, if we are chosen at all: not of works foreseen,

* By this clue we are easily guided through that apparent difficulty, that a man is saved *secundum opera*, and *propter opera*, as the mark and badge of an interest in Christ, and as a meetness for the enjoyment of heaven's holy bliss; and yet is he not saved, *secundum merita operum*.

for he can foresee nothing good in us, but as he determines to give it us. And in this case he cannot foresee that we shall effect a new and spiritual nature in ourselves :—for nothing can rise above its own nature. *Can the Æthiopian change his skin?* Besides, this new nature is *the consequence and effect*, not the cause, of being elected in Christ, and of being represented by him. *Ye are a chosen generation—that ye should shew forth the praises of him, who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light**, says St. Peter : with whom St. Paul agreeing, sayst†, *We are chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, THAT WE SHOULD BE holy, &c.*

Fifthly, One scarce needs to add, that the doctrine of *final perseverance* is contained in this figure which Adam was of Christ ; as it is said concerning Christ's sheep, to whom he is *the Good Shepherd* ; (which is but another way of expressing his federal headship) *They shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.* For, whoever were *chosen and included in Christ*, their *perseverance follows* ; otherwise they were *not* chosen and included in him. By virtue of what Christ did and suffered, they are justified for ever ; and therefore being *in Christ Jesus*, *there can be no condemnation to them.* Besides, as the corrupt nature derived to us from Adam is a security for persevering in sin, so the new and spiritual nature derived to us from Christ, is a security for perseverance in holiness.

* Pet. i. 2.

† Eph. i.

Sixthly, Though salvation is thus confined to those only who were included in Christ before the foundation of the world, yet is there no room for melancholy and distress, to any who truly and habitually desires an interest herein. For such *seeking the Lord with the whole heart*, being an act of regeneracy*, is a proof that the soul thus seeking was included in Christ. Thus none are shut out from mercy, but they who feel no real inclination to, or want of, mercy, in Jesus Christ. And surely these are excluded from mercy upon every other scheme of salvation, as well as this.

To these things might be added, lastly, that in this figure is shewn the nature and office of *Faith*, or of an *assurance* of Faith; neither of which are a *cause* of our salvation; only the first, an act of receiving it, and the second, an act of fully and comfortably enjoying it.

A few reflections shall close this subject.

The imputation of Adam's sin to us, is a *matter of fact*; why then should the imputation of *Christ's righteousness* to us be thought incredible? This is less objectible by far than the other.

Indeed, in one sense, all the virtue and goodness that is in heaven or earth, cannot so properly be said to be *inherent* as *imputed*. For as light, not its own, but that shed from the sun, is imputed to the dark globe of the moon, and is thence called moon-light, so goodness, not their own, not self-existent in them, but reflected

* Compare *Rom.* iii. 11. with *Prov.* xviii. 1. and *Pf.* xxiv. 6 & lxix. 32.

upon

upon the opake bodies, if I may so speak, of elect men and angels, is imputed to them, and the comfort and honor of it made theirs, as if it were, what it is not, and cannot be, their own.

If it be objected to this and the preceding discourse, that imputation of our sin to Christ and of his righteousness to us, is a thing in itself improper, I answer, first, concerning *imputation of sin*, that whether the end of the divine punishments of sin be to keep the sinless part of the universe from falling, or to treat sin, as the evil it is, both these ends are better answered, by Christ's representing a sinner, and suffering for him, than if he suffered in himself. Neither is *person* the object of punishment, but the treating sin as what it is, or the benefiting the universe by a dispersion of a due awe of God through it; *person* being only the vehicle, the receptacle, the vessel, or subject, not the object of punishment; and thus punishment may be transferred from the real agent of a crime, to any proper substitute, provided always, as in this case is every way provided, that thence the universe receive no detriment. And, secondly, concerning *imputation of righteousness*, and because Christ performed all that he did, not on his own account, but was understood by all creatures, and by the Creator, to be performing it on man's account, therefore there is no impropriety in *imputing* it to man. Nay, rather there would be great impropriety in *not* imputing it to man.

What is more frequent than imputation or representation amongst men? Proxies, attornies, vicars, deputies, commissaries, act each in a certain manner, and their actions are accepted as theirs, whom each of them represents. Why should it not be so in the Gospel?

Again, if it be objected, that there is something too tedious and complicated in this scheme of mercy by imputation, I answer, not more so than in nature and in providence. It is by a manifold instrumentality that every thing is done by the Almighty; and that for *our* sakes, not his; that in the several parts of each instrumentality, or means, might be conveyed to us some new truth, or some higher comfort. How many things are made necessary to raise the fruits of the earth? And yet a single *fiat* would supercede them all.

How wise is he, who distrusting his own faculties, draws his wisdom from the *word of God*. And while this and the other sceptic is attempting to explain away the doctrine of Christ's representation, how happy as well as wise is he, who, believing God's word concerning it, walks through life under *this* sense of things. "I am a miserable sinner, but Christ
 " is my Savior. By virtue of his transactions
 " in my stead; by virtue of his representing
 " me, and not eating the forbidden fruit, I
 " am, independently, passively, and eternally,
 " blessed, die where and when I may. I may
 " vary, but this my safety cannot. For all
 " my happiness being pendent on whether
 " Christ

“ Christ stood, and he having stood, my hap-
 “ piness is secure. Nothing can add to it, or
 “ take from it. If Adam had stood, I should
 “ have been thereby constituted righteous and
 “ happy; equally so am I constituted by the Se-
 “ cond Adam, of whom the first was a Figure.”

Thus *the worshipper being once purged, has no
 more conscience of sin, in point of destruction
 for it, but perfect love casts out fear. The son
 of the FREE-WOMAN, thus, having a good hope
 and everlasting consolation, through grace, is the
 heir of heaven; and, while he is on earth,
 having his heart set at liberty from servile prin-
 ciples, he repents, believes, obeys, not by con-
 straint, but willingly, and RUNS the way of God's
 commandments.*

END OF THE SEVENTH SERMON.

OF THE GOODNESS OF GOD.

S E R M O N VIII.

Z E C H A R I A H, ix. 17.

How great is his Goodness.

WHEN the Deity unveils himself to his creatures, it can only be for *their benefit*. May we, therefore, in *contemplating* his Goodness, *experience how great* it is, by the actual perception of all those advantages, which the revelation of this part of his character was intended to convey.

How do we acquire the idea of the *Goodness of God*? By observing, that in the *divine* behavior towards us, there is something of the same nature with, though vastly superior to, every thing that excites the idea of Goodness in us amongst men. In order, therefore, to our forming some faint notion of the Goodness of God, we must consider what circumstances excite the idea of Goodness amongst men. And here that we may not barely speculate, or be framing a kind of panegyric on the Supreme

preme Being, let us retain in mind at every fresh discovery of the Goodness of God, the following reflections. First, The extreme baseness of the least sin against such a Being as God. Secondly, How willing he must be to receive and to make happy any sinner, that will accept his mercy in Jesus Christ. Thirdly, How joyful must the consideration be, in the view of *eternity*, that, if we have received the offers of mercy by Jesus Christ, we deliver up our souls at death to one who is *Goodness itself*; from whom, therefore, nothing unpleasing is to be feared, but every thing great, glorious, and happy to be expected. As that greatest of men in these later times, *Father Paul, of Venice**, said on his death-bed, *Having nothing to present God with but sins and miseries, I am going to plunge myself into the bottomless ocean of the DIVINE GOODNESS, in and through Jesus Christ.*

By *Goodness* in the text is meant not virtue or purity, but a disposition to communicate nothing but happiness and benefits to others. For the context is, *The Lord their God shall save them, in that day, as the flock of his people: for they shall be as the stones of a crown; that is, of the highest possible estimation and dearness in the sight of God, and lifted up as an ensign upon his land.* The regard which God has for them shall be *conspicuous*; for (it immediately follows) *how great is his Goodness.*

* See his life, prefixed to his History of the Council of Trent, translated into English by Sir Nathaniel Brent, Knt.

This disposition to communicate happiness and benefits to others, excites amongst men the idea of goodness. And how greatly does such a disposition appear to be in God. Such a disposition *alone*, without any tincture of its opposite, is in him. And to him any other disposition is *impossible*. In him such a disposition always was and always will be. And it is *unlimited*, as well as *eternal*, in him. Neither can any creature in earth or heaven have the least drop of this disposition from himself; all the Goodness that is can only be an emanation from God. *How great then is his goodness!*

But let us *demonstrate* this description of the divine Goodness. We observe in some creatures a real and true disposition to bestow only happiness on others. But a creature can have nothing† which he does not *receive from the Creator*. Therefore, as some creatures possess Goodness, *God* must possess Goodness, or otherwise he could have none to bestow on others. And there is nothing and no one to *limit* God, therefore the *Goodness in him* is *without any limits*. And he is not capable of change, or variation; (which is an imperfection arising from accident, to which *he* must be superior) therefore, if God *is*, he *always will be*, and *always was*, Good. Good from *himself*; for there is no one older than, or prior to, himself, to be the giver of any thing to him. And Good *without any tincture, or capability*,

† Nothing *positive*, though he may *privative*; according to the old maxim, *Bonum oritur ex causâ positivâ et reali, malum ex quolibet defectu.*

of the contrary; for being good beyond all limits, so far, that is, infinitely, he is removed from the contrary. No thought of unkindness can ever rise in the breast of a Being, who is GOOD *beyond any limits*. For where that unkindness began, there would begin a limit to the goodness of that being. And where there is a disposition to make others happy, there must be a desire to, or pleasure and happiness in, this disposition; therefore the desire, the pleasure, and happiness of God, must consist in his Goodness, in his disposition to make others happy. *How great then is his Goodness, and, what very properly follows the text, how great is his beauty*. Who does not rejoice, that God is the Being he is. Well is it said, *the Lord is King, the earth may be glad thereof*.

From this demonstrated character of God, it follows, that the being of natural or moral evil can only be permitted in the universe, from a mere desire to promote its happiness; and therefore that the existence of hell-torments must be necessary thereto: and consequently, the number, though amazingly great, of the sufferers there, will bear but a small proportion to the vastly greater number of the rest of the universe. And as *pain* is suffered in our present *temporal* system to exist, consistently with the mere Goodness of God, therefore, consistently with the same goodness, pain may exist, and *eternal pain*, when our *system* enlarges to *eternal*. A deduction this, which if not demonstrated, is certainly more *probable* than the *contrary*, or any other way of accounting for the being of pain,
or

or for the permission of that which occasions pain. It is more likely that any such thing as either natural or moral evil, in time or in eternity, should have been permitted, for the *benefit*, than for the *hurt*, of the universe; that is, of the rest, the far greater part, of the universe; nay, of the *whole universe*, if we consider the number of the lost as *evanescent*, in comparison of all the *men, angels, authorities, and powers*, who are blest and happy. On this large scale, comprehending all other creatures besides man, and including all eternity, what the poet says, is indisputably true;

All nature, is but art unknown to thee;
 All chance, direction which thou canst not see;
 All discord, harmony not understood;
 All partial evil, universal good.

But the Goodness of God, his mere desire to raise the greatest possible happiness, is not only thus demonstrable from the character of God, with application to all the misery, or any thing else, which he permits in time or in eternity, but it will be more visible that God loves and seeks the mere happiness of the universe, when we see his behavior in inviting sinners to mercy; in blessing them after refusing it, during the interval of their probation on earth; in receiving the worst of sinners that accept his mercy; and in other particulars which we shall presently consider.

Only

Only let us remark that, whatever amongst men, increases our idea of their goodness, or disposition to make others happy, is accumulated in God. Thus, where we see persons not only disposed to make others happy, but use great *condescension* herein, we are struck with the idea of greater goodness. How does God's goodness then expand itself here in full flower to our view. For when God blesses a creature, it is in a way of condescension indeed: not only because of the vast distance between a creature and the *Creator*, who HUMBLETH *himself*, says the Psalmist, *when he only beholds the things that are in heaven and earth*, but because he emptied himself of his glory, and took upon him the form of a slave, and became obedient even unto death, and to the death of the cross, for our redemption. Did the uncreated and ineffable God stoop so low as this, in order to our happiness? His must be goodness divine indeed!

Our ideas of goodness are increased by the purity of the motives in conferring happiness on others. One man helping another may reflect that it may come to the turn of himself, or of his, to want help in return; or that Providence might have appointed this sorrow to him as well as to others; and thus by a fellow-feeling he is excited to relieve others. But in the self-sufficient and independent God, no such imaginations or motives can dwell. He does good simply for the sake of doing good. He is no gainer by it. It is the pure love and delight
which

which he has in conferring happiness, which moves him to do good. *How great then is his Goodness.*

That Goodness rises still higher, if we join to the *condescension* and *purity* of it, the great *cost*, *difficulty*, and *trouble*, which God was obliged to use, and the great *sufferings* he underwent, before he could accomplish his purpose of conveying happiness to us.

Add to which, the largeness of his bounty displays his Goodness. For, blessings, none less than infinite in duration, could suffice the Almighty to give us; and because the finite capacity of creatures could not admit of blessings infinite in quantity, therefore, all that God can do, all that he can contrive, shall be given. For, by an happy retrospect on the past, and an happy, unbounded prospect of the future, in heaven, there will be, as by other means also, a perpetually *increasing* happiness, a perpetual approximation to the infinite happiness of God himself, more and more, to all eternity. It may well then be said, not only that *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard*, but that *it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive, the things that God hath prepared for them that love him*; or as Isaiah, from whom the passage is quoted, has it, *for them that wait for him*.

But how great is the Goodness of God, if we take into the account the unworthiness of the objects of it, at least of the human objects. To creatures always amiable and innocent, it
were

were no wonder that Goodness should be extended, but that God should be able, from the exuberance of his disposition to make others happy, to be kind to the ungrateful, to overlook fault upon fault, sin upon sin, without end, as he does in the best of men, that all the floods of imperfections, deficiencies, and guilts in his people should not be able to quench the fire of his zeal to make them eternally happy, this is goodness indeed every way divine and infinite.

Let us contemplate some pictures of it, first, *in his manner of calling sinners to repentance, and a Savior.*

Here what anxiety and concern (speaking after the manner of men) does he discover for human happiness. *As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but rather that he should turn and live. Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die, O! house of Israel.* He makes oath thus, that they are not devoted to destruction by him, but by themselves; that it is not in consequence of his decree, but of their wilful, invincible, and final impenitence and unbelief, that they are lost: that if they would but turn their faces instead of their backs to him, and ask, or accept, salvation by Christ, they should have it. *Turn ye;* he directs them what course to pursue; *turn ye;* he importunes them to coincide with his instructions and asseverations: *why will ye die?* he argues the point, and states the consequences of their rejecting him; and finishes, not only with the
most

most endearing form of compellation; *House of Israel*, but with an *exclamation*, O! *House of Israel*, to convey the ideas to us of the greatest tenderness and deepest solicitude for our welfare. How does the Deity appear to fight on this occasion, O! *that men were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end. O! that there were such an heart in them. O! Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? What can be done more for my vineyard, that I have not done for it? How shall I give thee up? How shall I—how can I bring myself to this act—how shall I make thee as Admah and as Zeboim?* Destruction he calls his *strange work*, that it is foreign to his nature to inflict pain, and where he must do it, for the sake of virtue and the universe, he is said to *come out of his place* on the occasion. *Ah! (אוי) I will ease me,* he says at length, with deep-fetcht sounds of grief—*Ah! I will rid me of mine adversaries.* He weeps over Jerusalem because devoted by its crimes to ruin. To pain us seems to pain him, though the pains he inflicts are not only barely proportioned to our sins, but incurred when mercy might have been had for taking. What divinity of Goodness is here. Nero had but one fine stroke of goodness in all his life, and that was weeping when he signed the first death-warrant under his reign. And this circumstance, though so inconstant and short-lived as it is, so affects us, that, on account of it, in the midst of our vehement indignation at his villanies and murders, we can stop, and,
for

for a moment, admire him. How much more is our admiration then due to the Goodness of God, which describes itself as weeping for their damnation who will not weep for it themselves. Expressions these which do not paint the Almighty as effeminate, or as unable to accomplish his purposes, or as disappointed and foiled where a sinner is lost:—neither do they in the least degree contradict the eternal and all comprehensive decrees of God. For none of the decrees offer violence to us. They operate upon our free-agency, as Judas who was ordained to betray Christ, betrayed him out of the wickedness of his own free-will and covetousness. And, therefore, though God in his counsel, secret to us, may have sworn in his wrath, that some shall not enter into his rest, yet will he, to vindicate his own goodness and justice, set motive upon motive before a sinner, to induce him to repent and believe, thereby proclaiming to the universe how quit he is of the sinner's damnation, and how it originates wholly from himself. In the fullest foreknowledge that man's obduracy will *reject* his offers, and every affecting and alarming appeal, in which by *putting on* human passions he can possibly address them, he still graciously determines to *make* his offers and appeals; that it might not be said he acted merely on his foreknowledge, and did not speak to their consciences and understandings, and hopes and fears, in the strongest manner possible. One might have expected, that if God foreknew all pains would be ineffectual,

fectual, he would use none, but his divine goodness will exert them, to give the sinner the greatest possible opportunity to be happy. And while thus with the truest and highest goodness he sincerely and pathetically addresses all, it surely can be no impeachment of that Goodness, or of his sincerity and tenderness, if, seeing that all he *can* thus do in a *natural way* is ineffectual, he determines all shall not still be lost, and therefore that, while he leaves the bulk of kind to this their own frustration of all the *natural* means that *can* be used to save them, some shall, by *extraordinary* and *supernatural* and *new-creating* and irresistible exertions of his upon them, be saved. Surely, here is no impeachment of the divine Goodness, but rather an aggrandisement of it. And surely his Almighty agency in this latter case, does not lessen his sincerity or goodness in the former, but very much the contrary. Respecting both we must confess, How great is his Goodness! How great is his Goodness to the reprobate, as well as the elect*! which will be more strikingly seen, if we consider another picture of the divine Goodness, namely, the manner in which they who persist in refusing mercy are treated, all the while their measure of iniquity is filling up.

* If we think it would be a greater instance of the divine Goodness if *all were elect*, and *none suffered to be lost*, the answer is, if this consisted with the designs of the greatest possible Goodness, it would have been so; but as it is not so in fact, therefore, though we may not see how, it consists not with the scheme and designs of the greatest possible Goodness that it should be so.

Incredible,

Incredible, that we should find the Goodness of God displayed under circumstances like these! But so it is, because it is the Goodness of a God. And, therefore, we find, that if men are determined on their own ruin, although a Savior is mysteriously provided for them, and although their use of that Savior has been passionately implored, but in vain, yet shall they not lose a *present* heaven, if they do a future one. *Some* happiness they *shall* have; the best that their sinful dispositions will admit of: some honor, often, some wealth, and a variety of comforts in the lowest spheres of life, equal in worth to others more painted and showy in the higher ones. They doom themselves to hell, but they shall not suffer it *yet*; month after month, year after year, does God delay to send them thither. And if, till at last they are delivered up to their voluntary ruin, this world becomes a sort of prison, its walls, as it were, shall be of marble, and its bars of gold. Their dungeon-bed shall be silk, their table splendor, and the hours of their existence here shall partly trickle with perfumes. For (to drop the metaphor) *they come in no misfortune, like other folk. Their eyes swell with fatness; they do even what they list. They have children at their desire, and leave the rest of their substance for their babes.* How great is the Goodness of God, to suffer them to have one drop of comfort at any rate, in *time* any more than in

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eternity,

eternity, seeing they reject *comfort in him* both in time and in eternity.

Another picture of the *divine Goodness* is the *manner of his receiving sinners when applying for salvation through Christ*. His manner of *receiving* them, did I say? Rather, it should have been, his manner of rising and meeting them, when they are yet *afar off*, as soon as their feet are observed to tend towards their heavenly Father's house. On this occasion of a prodigal's return, all the soft and dissolving rushes on the heart of Deity, unusual emotions of fatherhood flutter within him; his feet find wings as it were, he runs, and falls on the neck of his recovered son, forgets all his crimes and kisses him.

Whom do we see yonder in sacred story? It is MANASSEH: one that made the streets of Jerusalem, the city of the living God, run down with blood. What a character this! What blood must he have shed, to justify so great and bold an expression, as that of his making whole streets run down with blood, as ours do with rain in wet seasons; and what valuable blood must he have shed; it was that of God's people. The streets were those of *Jerusalem*. And this was only a small part of his dreadful character; (see 2 Kings xxi. and 2 Chron. xxxiii.) And yet no sooner does this *human fiend* fall prostrate with penitence and faith at the foot of God's mercy in Christ, but he is tenderly lifted up: no sooner is his hard heart broken in repentance, but, as if the heart of God himself were broken too in sympathy, he
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is immediately pardoned all, and taken into the most tender and unchangeable favor.

MARY MAGDALENE, amongst innumerable others, at length ventures to the throne of grace; and, though a sinner of unusual magnitude, speeds. So does the *woman taken in adultery*; and the *woman of Canaan*; and *Zaccheus*. Neither are they upbraided with their crimes, when once made sensible of them. They are received, and treated with as much tenderness, as if they had been ever innocent: and their stories are recorded not from the least remain of unkindness to them, but to teach others the worst and vilest, to use the same mercy in Jesus Christ, and be sure of the same gentleness and regard. *How great is his Goodness!*

The THIEF on the cross obtrudes on our view. It seems little likely that he had been used to pray, or to do more than sin, all his life. And yet when his guilt had brought him to a gallows, because he despaired of every thing but the mercy of God in Christ, and could only implore mercy as a free gift, with this simple prayer, *Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom*, appearing to have but imperfect views of the way of salvation, he was nevertheless accepted: and accepted at the time when Jesus Christ was in the act of dying. The Savior could not go on with his death, could not attend to his very last agonies, but must stop in the article of expiring, when he heard a hopeless sinner only ask for mercy, and must make

him this reply, *To-day*; as soon as you can wish; as soon as you are dead; prefixing, that his faith might not tremble, *verily, verily I say unto thee; To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise. How great is his Goodness!*

The last instance I shall mention, is that of ST. PAUL, or SAUL, as his first name was. Saul yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter—Well! what?—is apprehended by a vision, and alarmed with a sense of his spiritual danger, and at length, not as before, formally, but now genuinely, *behold he prayeth!* What is the consequence? Are his speeches unrelenting and cruel, at *Stephen's* lapidation, objected to him? Are his persevering ardors of violence against all of the sect of Christianity cast in his teeth? No! Vision upon vision is vouchsafed for his complete conversion. And so entirely are his sins forgotten, that, as if he had been the greatest *friend*, instead of enemy, to the Gospel, he is honored with the charge and dignity of an Apostle: is made an Apostle more adorned and favored than the rest of the Apostles, not only in the abundance of the conversions effected by his means, in various regions, but in the inditing a very large part of that volume, which the Holy Ghost intended for the benefit of the church in all ages. *How Great is his Goodness!*

We have hitherto seen the Goodness of God in inviting sinners to happiness, in forbearing and even blessing them in this world, though they reject his invitations, in receiving those who come to him for pardon and mercy by
Christ

Christ—now let us see the exhibition of this divine temper of bestowing only happiness and benefits, in the manner of his treating men *after* he has pardoned and blessed them. Let us see what *laws* he gives them. These are such as are full of the same Goodness for them to exercise to one another, which he exercises to them. Are his people injured? He charges them to be at an infinite distance from either acting, or *feeling*, malice and revenge; not to allow themselves in return in so little as *evil-speaking*; to be full of *bowels of mercies and compassions, to be pitiful, tender-hearted, forgiving one another as Christ also forgave them. Bless them which curse you; bless, but never curse. Pray for them which despitefully use you. Be kind to the unthankful and unworthy. Melt your enemies with friendships. Give to him that asketh of thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away*, possess a temper, which on any sufficient occasion, and where such an act would not be presumptuous, or a flinging away those bounties which Providence sends for your necessary support, and a wilful incurring of distress, possess a temper so liberal and large-hearted, as under the above circumstances would be ready to *sell all that thou hast and to give to the poor*. Nor can I omit under this article that old Levitical precept, *Thou shalt not see the a kid in its mother's milk*: which thing, though it could not pain either the kid or its dam, yet because a tender heart might feel some revolvings at it, thou shalt never do what is only ap-

parently and ever so distantly opposite to kindness and goodness.

But not only the laws which God gives his people are pregnant with mere goodness, the very *self-denial* which he enjoins being for their happiness, but the amazing *patience of God with his people* contains a wonderful display of his goodness. When we consider what men are able to do, and how far they can go by the help of mere natural principles, and how very much farther they might be expected to go by the help of *spiritual* joined to natural principles; and when we compare with these ideas the perpetual *deficiency*, and *occasional insensibility* and indevotion of the most regenerate men that are, the indolence of the most active, and deadness of the most lively, the frequent insincerity, insipidity, and foolishness and formality of our prayers; when we consider what peculiar punishments they might naturally expect, who are, at the most, but little penetrated with the divine Goodness to them, and that sins against extraordinary mercy and irresistible love, and against a new nature too, must be sins of a deeper dye than those of other men; when we consider these, and a thousand other evils that might be mentioned, we must stand astonished at the divine Patience with us. Having borne with us, equally with others, *before conversion*, to find us so imperfect after it, must surely be highly incensing to all but the *God of Patience and Consolation*. But so illustriously superior is he to all our affronts, *after regeneracy*,

peracy, that though he might continually say of us as he did of *Coniah, son of Jehoiakim, King of Judah, if he were the signet on my right hand, yet would I pluck him thence*; still doth he bear and forbear, and, what is more, protest, that *as he hath sworn that the waters of Noah shall no more cover the earth, so has he sworn that he will no more be wroth with his people, nor rebuke them.*

One or two short proofs of this, in the persons of Scripture characters, shall conclude the whole of this most endearing subject. Look at PETER. He denied Jesus Christ; denied that he had any acquaintance with him; denied this with oaths and imprecations; denied it, not only once, but again and again with a repetition of those oaths and imprecations. Whereupon our Lord, as being full of mere Goodness, forgot his own trial, and the great things pendent on it, and appearing to feel more for Peter's weakness than for himself and his own troubles, *turns and looks upon Peter.* 'Twas a look of divine Benignity, infusing at once Mercy, and the means of it, Repentance, into him, so that instantly Peter *goes out and weeps bitterly.* And, as if all the while our Lord was dying, and all the while he was in the grave, he was feeling for Peter's misery and remorse, the first syllable we hear our Lord utter on his resurrection, is, *Go and tell my disciples,* AND PETER, poor, mourning and desponding Peter in particular, *that I am risen from the dead.*

DAVID had not only sinned most awfully; but seemed likely to continue insensible thereof, by means doubtless of those mitigations of his crimes which he used, *the sword devoureth one as well as another*, and the like. But rather than he shall remain thus, something supernatural shall be done. A Prophet shall see a vision of the Almighty, and be inspired in such a manner to address David as shall enlighten, abase, and send him for that mercy, which was ready even for a sinner like him.

SOLOMON looks like a pattern more strangely noble than the rest, of the *divine Goodness*. Who would ever have thought to have found the wisest of men that ever lived, the finest *moral*, and profoundest *natural*, philosopher, the deepest investigator of right and law : who should have thought that one so highly and so intimately favored of heaven as he was, and a *King of Israel* too, should be able to surrender himself to profuse pleasures of every kind, as at length ended in building a temple to Ashtaroth, the goddess of the Zidonians, in order to gratify some of the ladies in his suite. After such a fall, surely his recovery is impossible. But the Goodness of God has no limits, and therefore this same enormous sinner Solomon is restored, is permitted and inspired to write afterwards a recantation of his sins, in that book which God himself intended us to study in all the ages of time ; and not only so, but so totally was his crime forgot, that he receives the most extraordinary discoveries (which indeed

deed his repentance for such a crime needed) of the *love*, the unchangeable, eternal, and infinite love of God to his people, as appear not to have been granted to any one else whatever, while he was writing that most spiritual and sublime part of all Scripture, *the Song of Songs*, as it is, by way of eminence above all others, most fitly called. *How Great is his Goodness*, so to obliterate offences, as to honor and reward his penitent people, as if, I had almost said, they had even merited *rewards*, instead of *punishments*, by their offences.

To this catalogue, Noah, Abraham, Lot, Moses, Aaron, and who not, might be added, as each being so many pyramids erected by the divine Goodness, for the display of its honors for ever.

But let the instances already spoken to suffice. They shew amply enough, that *under the feet of the God of Israel, is, as it were, the paved work of a sapphire stone**; the color of a serene and most benign sky, and therefore emblematical of pure and perfect goodness. All that I shall add, is, dejected and desponding sinner, the God whom thou darest *delighteth in mercy*. Embrace it then, without hesitation, in Christ Jesus, where mercy is virtuous and chaste, yet infinite. *For all the promises of God are yea and amen in Christ Jesus. Trust in him, be not afraid.* You cannot do him a greater favor, than to be made happy by him. *Though your sins are as scarlet, yet shall they be white as snow: though they be red*

* Exodus.

like crimson, yet shall they be as wool. For how Great is his Goodness!

And you that have received Christ Jesus the Lord, remember that *his mercy endureth for ever*. That all we, or even Moses, could see with mortal eyes, of the *Goodness of God*, is only his *back*, as it were, not his *face*. For *how Great is his Goodness!*

END OF THE EIGHTH SERMON.

OF THE FREENESS OF SALVATION.

S E R M O N IX.

R o M. iv. 5.

To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the Ungodly, his Faith is counted to him for Righteousness.

IN the preceding discourses, first, the ruin of man, and afterwards the divine method of restoring him, have been largely pointed out. Come we now to consider who are the *subjects* of this restoration, and in what manner we are to avail ourselves of it.

And here the text is full of information. It acquaints us, that though a man be destitute of all good works, and full of all evil ones, *ungodly*, yet if he believes on Jesus Christ, *who justifieth the ungodly*, his *faith is counted to him for righteousness*. From which we gather, First, That salvation is open for any one, without any respect whatever to our works, nay, on a supposition that we have none but wicked works. *To him that worketh not, to the ungodly.*

Secondly,

Secondly, That any one, though thus vile and wretched, who avails himself of Christ's salvation, does it by an act of assuming that salvation to himself, free as it is for any, and public for all that will, to use it. *To him that worketh not, BUT BELIEVETH on him that justifieth the Ungodly.*

Thirdly, By such act of a sinner, of *him that worketh not, of the Ungodly*, proceeding as such to take the merits of Christ to himself, those merits are thereby assigned over to him, and he is constituted righteous thereby: as righteous, as the law and nature of God, and the condition of our eternal happiness, require he should be: *his faith is counted to him for righteousness.*

This then shall be the threefold distribution of the present discourse.

First, That salvation is open for any one, without any respect whatever to our good works, nay, on a supposition that we have none but evil works. *To him that worketh not, to the Ungodly.*

So it must be, if any one creature on earth is saved. For what the reason of the thing strongly shews, and Scripture with equal strength asserts, is, that *without faith it is impossible to please God*: that Cain's offering was disregarded, and Abel's accepted, merely because *he* had faith, and Cain had not: that *whatsoever is not of faith is sin*. Consequently, before we take Christ's righteousness to ourselves by faith, we have only evil works and no good ones. In this quality then, alone, as
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mere sinners, can we take that righteousness to ourselves. In this quality, then, alone, as sinners, *as no workers, as ungodly*, can we be saved. We have no occasion for the righteousness of another, but on the supposition of having none ourselves. It is only the consideration of our being without good works, and ungodly, that can lead us to believe on the Savior for pardon and happiness. *The whole need not a physician, but they who are sick.*

No mortal then can be saved unless the patent runs, as in the text, *To him that worketh not, to the ungodly*; this being the character of all men previously to an interest in Christ.

But in what quality soever we, upon believing, are constituted righteous, in that quality are we so constituted, and saved, *for ever*: as might easily be shewn from the nature of such righteousness and salvation, they being each indivisible, unalienable and eternal, otherwise no righteousness, no salvation at all: so that if, as was shewn above, in quality of a miserable and mere sinner without works and ungodly, I was upon believing constituted righteous in Christ, and saved, I must then have been constituted righteous in Christ *for ever*, and saved *for ever*, in quality of a miserable and mere sinner, without works and ungodly. Therefore, as at first, so throughout and to all eternity, they who are saved, are considered in themselves as sinners, as destitute of works and ungodly.

Reflections these how suitable to human wretchedness. For, while the best of men continually

continually feel the remains of indwelling sin, and are thereupon apt to suspect the continuance of the divine favor to them, how supporting must the idea be, that they were originally and for ever constituted righteous in Christ, on the supposition of their being in themselves *sinners, without works and ungodly*. What like this sentiment can make their hopes even, and their joys steady. What like this can at the same time fill them with deep and liberal shame and grief for being no better, and with growing admiration of the pure and glorious grace of God, for making his salvation so perfect and all-sufficient. And, therefore, what, like this view of things, can tend to secure at once the most genuine humility and penitence, and the most cordial and adoring attachment to God and his laws.

But the consideration that salvation is open for any one, without any respect whatever to our works ; nay, on a supposition that we have none but evil works, is particularly applicable to those, who, under conviction of sin, are afraid to apprehend God's mercy in Christ. Such persons are prone to think, that salvation can never be for such wretches as *they* are ; that if ever it should be proper for them to take it to themselves, it must be after they have arrived at a certain point either of amendment, or of sorrow and concern ; and for the period when they shall arrive at that certain point of amendment or condition, they wait and are likely to wait,

wait, like the countryman of old, who, in passing over the river, was tarrying till all the waves were gone by. But if such persons could but fix their eye upon this text, that salvation is *to him that worketh not, to the ungodly*, his distresses would be at an end: he would see that salvation was intended to be, as it must be, to reach *any* case, *of* grace, not of works; of God's rich goodness, and not of man's desert; by Christ, and not by ourselves; and that all the business of the law is to bring us to Christ; that as soon as we see our need of him, we are instantly to use him; that this we cannot do too soon; that till we do this we cannot be holy, nothing being either good, or acceptable to God, till it is done in Christ's name, as one that *personifies* Christ before God; if such persons could but thus have their understandings enlightened with the full scope and spirit of the text, they would forthwith trust in his boundless merits and be happy.

By considering the office of conviction of sin, we learn how much, and what kind of conviction is necessary. Its office is * to teach us our perishing want of a Savior, in order to redeem us from the fit and righteous condemnation of an holy, just, and good law. Therefore, whenever we have sufficient conviction to teach us our perishing want of a Savior to redeem us from the penalty of a law, which we see to be holy, just, and good, we have conviction as much in quantity, and as

* John xvi. 8.

good in quality, as answers the original use of conviction. If we want convictions to such a degree as shall fill us with a repentance so great, as to make us at all amiable or excellent in the sight of God, there we thwart the intention of convictions; which is to lead us not into ourselves as amiable or excellent; but *out of ourselves* as the creatures we truly are, without works and ungodly, and therefore in need of God's mere and sovereign grace, in Jesus Christ. The prevailing disposition of human nature is to reverse the doctrine before us, and, as the golden apple in antiquity was inscribed *to the most beautiful*, to inscribe mercy *to the most repentant and good, to him that worketh, to the godly*, in perfect contrariety to the text, which says, *To him that worketh not, to the ungodly.*

Hence we find *no conditions* annexed to the Gospel, as there were to the law. *This* treats man as what he *ought* to be, and points out, that heaven ought not to be bestowed but upon perfect righteousness; *that* treats man as what he *is*, and therefore points out Jesus Christ as the substitute for man. Hence we read, that the offers of mercy through Christ are *without terms*, *Ho! to EVERY ONE THAT THIRSTETH, let him come and buy wine and milk WITHOUT MONEY AND WITHOUT PRICE. WHOSOEVER WILL, let him come and take of the water of Life FREELY.* If any will have the *inclination*, the *thirsting*, or the *willing*, to be a condition, he may; but surely the word *condition* is never so used in human affairs; neither can it at all agree

agree with the words WITHOUT MONEY AND WITHOUT PRICE, AND FREELY ; which indisputably shew that no works, or godliness, are necessary. *To him that worketh not, to the ungodly,* says the text.

This reasoning will receive additional strength from considering not only the text, but the scope of the whole *epistle* whence it is taken. The Apostle's method in which, is, first, to draw a dreadful but too true a picture of the Gentile world, afterwards to insist that the same equally belonged to the *Jew* ; then from a mixed description of *both*, to infer, that *every mouth must be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God*. Consequently, *that by the deeds of the law no flesh living could be justified*. Whereupon immediately he introduces Jesus Christ, as *set forth for a propitiation for our sins*, exactly under the circumstances of the text, *to him that has no works, to the ungodly*. Next we hear him contend, that *Abraham* himself was saved thus, in *uncircumcision*, by Christ's righteousness imputed to him through faith†. He then shews that the ground and sense of Christ's death and resurrection, was the deliverance and justification of all others, as well as of Abraham, in the same way‡. That peace and holiness are blessings bestowed in *consequence* hereof§ ; that in this œconomy there is an exact correspondence to Adam's imputed sinfulness|| ;

† Rom. iv. 11.

§ Romans v.

‡ v. 24.

|| v. 19.

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that the fullness of pardon herein is no incitement or opportunity to sin, but the contrary; because (what I am to consider under the second head) *a death unto sin* is implied in the believing act of taking the pardon of it—that the gift of this holiness, or *death unto sin*, is included in the gift of eternal life†; which eternal life, however, is not through that gift of holiness, but *through Jesus Christ our Lord*—that notwithstanding this principle of holiness‡, there is (exactly in the same spirit of the text) an opposing principle of sin in believers, respecting which, however, there is (in the same spirit of the text) *no condemnation, because they are in Christ Jesus*§—that the origin of their safety and blessedness in *him*, was the unconditional, free, sovereign election of God, similar to that of Jacob and Esau¶;—and that from a consideration (amongst other things) of this eternal and infinite love of God to such sinners as they are, thus rendering their salvation secure and wholly independent of themselves, it behoves them to *present their bodies living sacrifices to God**, with the rules of which the epistle finishes.

Thus wholly irrespective of our works, and presupposing ungodliness, both before and after an interest in Christ, is the scheme of divine mercy; suited as it is every way on this plan, but not on any other, to the present *mixed* con-

† Romans vi. *throughout*.

¶ chap. ix, x, xi.

‡ chap. vii.

* chap. xii.

§ chap. viii.

dition of human nature ; leaving no place for despondency and melancholy in *any* case whatever, to him that leans on Christ alone, whose name and office is, *the Savior of the World*. And this argument, brought from the scope of the epistle to the *Romans*, is so much the more weighty, because, while the occasion of almost every *other* epistle seems to have been *particular*, arising from the circumstances of, or the errors creeping into, the Corinthian, or Galatian, and other churches, the *sole* design of *this* epistle seems to have been to lay down all the doctrines of religion in the exact order in which we ought to learn and practise them. The first lesson is Man's Guiltiness ; the second, God's Mercy in Christ ; the third, Man made holy, as well as happy, by it, and yet not made perfect here ;—fourthly, the Privileges of Man arrived thus far ;—fifthly, Predestination the cause of all ; and sixthly, and lastly, Obedience and Devotedness the Fruit and Effect of all.

How free then is salvation, and open for any one to take to himself, who feels a total need of it. *Free*, because wholly irrespective of our works, whether good or bad, obedience and devotedness being in no sense the *cause*, only the *effect* of it ; and also *free*, because *whoever will*, without any limitation or exception whatever, may assume it to himself. Free in the former sense, and therefore inclosing the best of men, notwithstanding all their falls and failings, treating with them as no workers, and ungodly from first to last, considered in *them-*

selves ; free in the latter sense, as health and life was from the brazen serpent of Moses, set up for any one that pleased to look at, and be saved ; or as the honey in the wilderness was for Jonathan, or any other passenger that chose to eat it ; free as the light is for any one that will open his eyes, or as the air for any one that will breathe it. Why then should any one who wants an interest in Christ, hesitate, on any pretence whatever, to believe such an interest open for him. No circumstances, no wants, no sins exclude it. However unlike our *experience* (as it is fitly called) may be to that of others, consisting of more or less terror, or conviction, or holiness, than others ; however empty we seem to ourselves of all grace, and only full of weakness and misery, the text goes on the supposition that these and similar circumstances would occur, and it forbids them all from being the least bar to a sinner's taking to himself an interest in Christ. *To him that worketh not, to the ungodly*, includes every possible distress and ground of fear.

These ideas should be distinctly and for ever set down in the understanding, memory, and conscience ; and then they cannot fail of such an effect, as might naturally be expected from any divine doctrine, namely, *a peace of God which passeth all understanding*. These ideas are necessary to be habitually recollected and contemplated, as the perpetual and all-sufficient warrant, licence and authority, upon which any one believes Christ to be his Savior : which
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is a point I come now briefly to consider. *To him that worketh not, but BELIEVETH on him that justifieth the ungodly.*

By some expressions under the first head, I am aware it will be thought, that if salvation be *to him that worketh not, to the ungodly*, then all good works and godliness would be *unnecessary*, nay, *improper* and *absurd*, as they would contradict the consideration under which alone he is saved. Not so; as a slight recollection will shew. For though it be true, that a man, as a mere sinner from first to last in himself, takes salvation *in believing*, yet a *part of that salvation*, if not the *greatest* part of that salvation, is *deliverance from sin* as well as *hell*, and the bestowment of *holiness* as well as *happiness*, both in time and eternity. For there can be no true happiness without holiness, and in proportion as sin is in us, whether pardoned or not, it must in its own nature produce misery. In proportion, therefore, as sin is, and godliness is wanting, in us, in that proportion we should have reason to suspect whether we have taken Christ's salvation to ourselves. Nay, it is certain, that if we have no practical principle of good works, no habitual godly disposition, that salvation is not ours. For such a principle and disposition is of the *essence of salvation*. Thus is obedience secured not as the *condition* of salvation, *here* it is to be excluded and abhorred, but as being part of *salvation itself*. And accordingly we find repentance, though not a condition of faith, or of assuming

Christ's salvation to ourselves, yet *included in its very nature*. Thus. Does any address himself to take Christ's holy salvation to himself? This implies that such an one could be *happy* in such an holy salvation: but this is a change of mind from a bad to a good disposition and principle; and such a change of mind cannot look back upon a past life of sin, of *mere sin*, with pleasure, but with shame and pain; but these two particulars, together with *an application* (which is made by faith) *for mercy under a sense of just exposure to punishment*, are the whole of our idea of repentance; but they are included in the nature of faith, therefore repentance is included in faith or believing. Thus, while a man, considering himself as without works and ungodly, *believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly*, and on that account is indebted wholly to God's grace and mercy in Christ from first to last, yet does he in *believing* exercise good works and godliness; he does so on two accounts; because such an exercise is implied in the very form and nature of believing, and because believing is the act of assuming salvation, a part of which salvation is obedience. Hence we read, that he that believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is *born of God*. That faith is both an evidence and an instance of regeneracy of mind. *Who is he that overcometh the world but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God. He that believeth is born of God**.

* 1 John v.

This description of the *contents* of faith, or of what is implied in its nature, at once makes it probable that he that believeth shall be saved, or rather is already saved, *hath eternal life*, as our Savior expresses it, and also shews that the common historical faith of the bulk of Christendom is not the true saving faith of Holy Scripture, but something much higher and nobler than it. Indeed there is nothing of even a *moral* nature, in speculative, traditional faith. But, in *this* faith, where a sinner under a sense of his own eternal destitution and ruin, comes as one wholly without works and ungodly, to believe on the Savior, as on him *that justifieth the ungodly*, there the *heart* is engaged, as well as the head: there a man not only hears of a Savior and gives credit to his history, but *uses* him; and there a man shews a new and good disposition wrought in him, by the becoming ideas he has of his own bad conduct and character: a state of mind which of itself is a security for, nay, of itself must be the parent of, a better temper and practice than the past. The *profligate* and *self-righteous* alike can entertain ideas of *comparative merit*; but the Publican's, the *justifying* faith before us, viewing his character as it is, without any artificial extenuations, and viewing sin to be the evil it is, and so believing on Christ as on *him that justifieth the ungodly*, and as in that light alone *able* to justify him, *this* faith is of an *humble* nature. Herein is shewn, that the *pride* with which our ruin began, is, where our salvation begins, counteracted, and

an opposite principle thereto imparted to the soul. And it might be added that, as the chaster and purer we are, in that proportion we view lawless lust as more evil and abominable, so in these self-rejecting views of ourselves for sin, which are implied in the idea of believing on Christ, as one that justifies the ungodly, is implied *a general principle of holiness*, as the cause of our viewing that character of ours with *despair and detestation now*, which we could *once* think of either with some complacency, or with no disquiet and terror. Much more might be added to shew how intrinsically and efficiently holy this faith is, which of all other things seems at first sight most opposed to the interests of holiness: but let this suffice.

The sum of all is, that, while a man, under a sense of his having no works but being ungodly, *believes on him that justifies the ungodly, he therein commences godly*, and therein begins all good works; though not to be saved by such godliness or works, but on a supposition of his having none of both; such godliness and good works being *part of that salvation*, which he derives to himself upon believing, as one without works, on him that justifieth such, the ungodly. Thus the door of mercy stands always as wide open to the believer as Antinomianism itself can throw it, and yet the rights of holiness and good works are as sacred as Legality itself can wish. Thus the sinner is saved as a sinner, but in being thus saved is made, though very imperfectly here, a *saint*. Thus
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the finner is saved as one wholly without works and ungodly, but by virtue of that very salvation, performs them.

So much seemed necessary to be said, in vindication of the freeness of salvation from the charge of licentiousness. But lest such vindication should, while it satisfies the gainsayer, distress the believer himself, it may be proper to subjoin a syllable to that end.

Many really pious and regenerate persons may, from a sense of their miserable performances and frequent sins, be on that account apprehensive, that they are not truly pious and regenerate. *If it be so, why am I thus, and all these things are against me,* was the language of some great persons in old time, who yet found that *so it was*, and that, notwithstanding, *God was for them*. But surely at the lowest point of spiritual decay, a real believer, upon being asked whether he would not count it an inestimable happiness to perform all good works, and to admit not so much as an ungodly thought, would answer in the affirmative. But if not, the bias and prevailing and general turn of his heart is for God and Jesus Christ, and not for sin and the world. Make him offers ever so large to forsake his little hope, and he despises them. Neither can any falls he meets with break his inwrought principle of habitually desiring to be holy. And his love of holiness is *pure*, and without any respect to heaven and hell; as appears from this particular, that let him meet with two persons, one holy, the other
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not so, he will feel an attachment to the former which no ties of blood, or affinity, or friendship can excite to the latter. Holiness is that which he cannot help wishing to all he converses with, and the want of it he laments in them as well as in himself, without thinking, in general, of either punishments or rewards. At all times there is a labor and study in the believer to be holy, or else a shame and remorse for not being so. So that, *although the fig-tree do not blossom, neither is fruit in the vine*, yet is there a secret *sap* of spiritual life running through the believer's heart and manners, which, under a fuller aspect to the sun of righteousness, and in a more suitable soil, as heaven is, and with no variableness or inclemency of weather like that in this world, will infallibly thrust out the richest fruits of holiness to all eternity. *Here* are lets and hindrances innumerable, *there* will be none for ever. And so purely adapted is this principle in believers, that they are happy that heaven, the home destined for them, is a place where sin will not only have no well-being, but no being in them. This is one of the chief felicities of heaven in their opinions.

Observations these, which, while they leave the true believer in his present mixed state of sin and holiness, distinguish him from others who are not believers, and mark him out to his own view at the worst of times. Too much caution however cannot be given, that no one should be looking for these evidences, but in proportion

proportion to, and *as the consequence* of, believing, not as antecedent thereto; which may be a source of perplexity, but the other cannot. Peace, joy, love to God, and the like, will not be possible, at least not sensible, till, upon *believing on him that justifieth the ungodly*, a man has reason to think he has *a proper ground* of peace, joy, and grateful love to God.

This second head shall be concluded, as soon as one question more is put, and that is, How shall I who am made sensible at heart, that I have no works for which to be justified, but before God must appear wholly ungodly, how shall I perform the act of believing. To which I answer: As the trembling woman did, who on being assured that healing virtue dwelt nowhere but in Christ, ventured to touch the hem of his garment. Reflect thus, God has received satisfaction for sin by the death of Jesus Christ, God has also received from Jesus Christ a perfect performance of the law of righteousness in the room and stead of man, and this atonement and righteousness are set before sinners, for *WHOEVER will to take it to himself, and to believe it on his own behalf**. In doing which God Almighty pledges his divine truth that sinners shall be saved†. Here then I lay my hand on the freely proffered atonement and righteousness of Jesus Christ, and henceforth will plead in my conscience on earth, against all accusations of satan, the forgiveness of sins,

* Rev. xxii.

† John i. 12. iii. 14, 15, 16.

and

and an interest in God, declared to sinners upon believing, and in a dependance upon the *truth* of God herein, do charge *my flesh to rest in hope* in the grave, and to venture without fear beyond it, into the presence of my Maker and Judge. As Rahab's scarlet rope, by which she let down the messengers of Joshua, was pleaded by her, and therefore hung out from her window, as the reason of her stipulated salvation from the common massacre in Jericho, so do I place, in my judgment and heart before God, the merits of Jesus Christ alone, as the stipulated ground of exemption from the general destruction of mankind for sin. Or as the offenders under the Levitical law *layed their hands on the head of the victim* which was to be burnt, confessing their sins over its head, as thereby referring the guilt of them to it, and it was accepted for them to make atonement for them, so do I lay my hand upon Jesus Christ's sacrifice and obedience, as it were, I take hold of his merits, and thus over him confess, all to be true which the law can possibly charge me with; and expect, that, according to God's engagements, Christ shall be, and therein is, *accepted for me to make atonement for me for ever*. Thus do I *believe on him that justifieth the ungodly*, and rely on the event in the text, that *this faith shall be imputed to me for righteousness*: which is the third thing to be considered.

To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted to him for righteousness. For righteousness, not

as righteousness ; because *faith* is not our *righteousness*, but *Jesus Christ's merits* which are apprehended by faith : as possession of an house, or church, is taken by a *key* of either, or of a landed estate by a *turf* growing thereon. Faith is counted *for*, or *into* (^{us}) righteousness, as introductory to, or possessive of, righteousness.

How precisely correspondent is this method of salvation to that which has been drawn out in the former discourses, particularly in those concerning the *provision of mercy*, and *the constitution of Christ to be a federal head and second Adam*. To multiply texts in either testament to shew, that by a perfect righteousness alone performed for, and imputed to us, is salvation appointed to be conveyed to us, would be an endless task. Moses wrote of it, to it give all the prophets witness, that *through this man* (the God-man, Christ-Jesus) *is preached unto us the forgiveness of sins ; and by him all that believe are justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses*. What a source of unbounded confidence and joy is opened upon believing, that a miserable sinner as I am in myself, faith is counted to me *for* righteousness : that though *I* change, the *object* of my faith, and his divine righteousness change not ; that by faith I am for ever, and independently of any thing in myself, good or bad, constituted perfectly righteous, and shall so be accepted at the last day. Let him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly,

ungodly, always consider that his justifying righteousness is *in another*, and not *in himself*, and that *it is finished*, and cannot be affected or impaired by any accident whatever, or improved by any good qualities whatever. In the steady adherence to this one sentiment, that Christ has performed *his* righteousness, and that it has been unchangeably accepted for *him*, let him fight against all sin, and he shall overcome it; let him pursue every grace, and he shall overtake it; let him look for every the most exuberant comfort and spiritual growth, and his they shall at length be; *for all things are your's, for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's*. What objection can God himself have to a sinner upon coming to him at death, and finding a perfect righteousness performed for, and reckoned to, him? Whence it is said, *we are come to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to God the Judge of all**; and, *who is he that condemneth? It is God that justifieth†*. And with what wonder must angels behold sinners of the human race entering the world of glory, all washed from their sins in the blood, and all clothed in the righteousness of their ineffable Creator, *God manifest in the flesh!* A spectacle this which *we* each of us in particular, shall be, if, as *no workers*, but miserable sinners, we *believe on him that justifies the ungodly*: for then, as sure as God is true, our *faith shall be counted to us for righteousness*.

* Heb. xii. 23, 24.

† Rom. viii.

END OF THE NINTH SERMON.

OF THE TRUTH OF GOD.

S E R M O N X.

P S A L M xxxi. 5.

O! Lord, God of Truth.

BECAUSE the mercy of God is so free and unlimited, and we so unworthy of it, therefore the Supreme Being represents himself as endued with, what *we* call, TRUTH, by way of condescension to our capacities, in order to point out to us the certain accomplishment of his promises, notwithstanding *their* greatness and *our* unworthiness. This attribute is so important, that without it we may justly be full of suspicions, concerning the friendliness of any other attribute to us. The *justice*, or *holiness*, of God looks hostile to us. The *power* and *wisdom* of God may be in the interest of his justice against us. And that his *goodness* should embrace *us* in particular, may seem improbable from the nature and number of our sins. All is uncertain, whether the character of God is *for* or *against* us, till the TRUTH of God comes, with

with a special and particular promise in its hand, and assures us, that *whosoever will may take of the water of life**, the Redeemer's merits, *freely*, and that *to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith shall be counted to him for righteousness*. Hence it was, that in the view of both time and eternity, the Psalmist's whole dependance lay, as ours must too, on the *truth* of God: *Into thy hands I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, GOD OF TRUTH*.

At first sight no quality appears so little in the Almighty as this of *Truth*, it being no great merit in a man to be merely true, though it is a great demerit for him to be false. What glory can it be in God *not to break his word*? But when we consider *the provocations* he receives, by our misbehaviour, to depart from his word, and *to swear in his wrath that we shall not enter into his rest*, the glory of his persevering faithfulness is equal to that of any other perfection in him whatever. For suppose some royal patron to engage to confer an honor or benefit on a subject, and not to disappoint him upon even receiving an *injury* from him, how beautiful would be the Truth displayed on this occasion? Then suppose that injury or affront *repeated*, and yet the Truth of the Prince to be so sacred and high, as not to be moved still from his engagement to confer honor and benefits on the subject. Then suppose that subject
never

never to have deserved such intended favor at first, as well as to have forfeited it frequently afterwards. Then lastly suppose that the Prince received from him continual insults, and those of a very insufferable nature: if, after all, the Prince's sense of honor was so elevated, as to be superior to all the crimes of his subject, and notwithstanding them all to bind him to fulfil what he had once promised, how illustrious and great must his Truth be! Apply this to God and his creature. Take into the account the infinite evil and continuity of our sins against him; remember the benefit promised is unspeakably great and eternal; and we at first were wholly unworthy of it; and there will appear to be a divinity in this attribute of Truth, as much as in any other which resides in God. He that can promise to bless me, though such a sinner as I am, may the best of men say, and still, notwithstanding all my guilts, *abideth faithful* and true to his promise, must be no less than the *God of Truth*. Such, to our unspeakable comfort, is God; so that without fear or misgiving in death, we may, if depending on his promises in Christ, cheerfully resign our spirit, as into the hands of *the Lord, the God of Truth*, who cannot possibly disappoint us.

What applauses do all in heaven now give to this divine attribute! How do they admire and adore it afresh at every new retrospect of their sins upon earth. *Aaron*, among others, extols it as the great cause, why *he* was not cast
N off,

off, as well as others rejected for less crimes, for making the golden calf, and becoming high-priest to it, while Moses was with God in the mount. *Sampson* extols it, reflecting on his great public character of a *deliverer and Judge* of the children of Israel, and pointing to the harlot of Gaza, to the woman in the valley of Surek, and to Delilah. *John*, the beloved disciple, to mention no more, extols it, considering how peculiar the regard was of Christ for him, and comparing with this honor the unworthy return he made, in *forsaking Christ, and fleeing*, at a time when he should have fought and bled at his side. How would every one in heaven teach us, if they could descend thence to us, that in some if not many of their works, or words, or inward sensations which came not into act, they appeared but too much like reprobates instead of elect; that the faithfulness of God lifted them up when fallen, and, having first inspired them with repentance, gave them remission of sins and restoration to his favor. How would they assure us, that *there is no rock like our God*; on whom we cannot depend too much; that *faithfulness is the very girdle of his loins and truth of his reins*; and that *not one word can fail of all that he hath promised*.

The attribute we are now contemplating was designed to make future eternal blessedness as sure to us, as if we were already in possession of it. And hence we read, that Faith, or a dependance

dependance on the Truth of God, is the SUBSTANCE of things hoped for, the EVIDENCE of things not seen. Heaven is hereby realized and made present to us, the performance being as certain to be made, as that the promise is made. Indeed, in one sense, heaven may almost be said to be surer to us in promise than in possession. For upon our first entrance in thither, we shall probably be like *Peter*, who, thinking the happiness of his deliverance by the angel to be too great and wonderful to be real, *thought he saw a vision*: as it also happened to the ancient Jewish church, of which *David* says, *when the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, WE WERE LIKE THEM THAT DREAM*†.

The object, and only object of this perfection of the divine nature seems to be *our happiness*. For what can be the intention of declaring before-hand the punishment of impenitency and unbelief, but to reclaim us to duty and happiness. The Truth of God ought, and tends, to have this effect alone. The sense impressed on us hereby, of the inevitable perdition of our bodies and souls in hell to all eternity, unless we have an interest in Christ, directly points a rational creature to *seek* such an interest. The Truth of God represents hell as certain to us dying without such an interest, as if we were now already in hell. And, what can be the intention of declaring to us before-hand the certainty of heaven upon believing, but that *we might be filled with*

† Ps. cxxvi. 1.

all joy and peace in believing. This is the scriptural aim ascribed to God in assuming the character of Truth. God†, says the author of the epistle to the Hebrews, *willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things (his counsel and oath) in which it was impossible for God to lye, WE MIGHT HAVE STRONG CONSOLATION who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.*

The divine perfection now under consideration, describes God as positing his whole moral character upon the infallibility of the salvation of him that looks to Jesus Christ alone for it. For where would be the morality of a *perfidious* being, who engages for an event which he suffers not to take place? And how, in such a case, does the Almighty represent himself as one, who would be liable to be reproached by every instance of remarkable truth amongst men? *Jephtha*, a fallible mortal, makes a vow, a vow to sacrifice whatever came first out of the doors of his house, if he returned victorious from his war with the children of Ammon—And though it was his daughter, and only child that came first out of his house to meet him, yet such was the obligation he conceived he lay under to perform his vow, from the claim which truth had upon him, that though with inconceivable misery and woe, and after a lingering interval of two months, he nevertheless *did to her according to his vow.*

† Heb. vi. 17, 18.

Herod, in like manner, though he feared the people, lest an insurrection might ensue on beheading John the Baptist, and though he loved John's ministry and was greatly affected by it, yet when he had once promised the daughter of Herodias to give her whatsoever she asked, to the half of his kingdom, such was the religion of his word, that it surpassed all other considerations whatever, and, accordingly, the gift which she asked of *John the Baptist's head in a charger*, was forthwith given to her. And the famous *Roman Regulus*, having pledged his honor to the Carthaginians to return back to them, if the Romans refused the terms sent to them by him, after effectually dissuading their acceptance of these terms, had so high a sense of truth and fidelity, as to return, though he was thereupon to be put to the most exquisite tortures and death. Shall *man* be thus true, true though to his own detriment, and *God*, though independently happy, be *false*? Were the promises of acceptance through Christ unfulfilled by the Almighty, he would be a less virtuous, honorable, and moral being, than weak and wicked man. But the divinity of his Truth, as it is infinitely superior to that of man, makes the non-fulfilment of his promises infinitely and every way impossible. *God is so true*, that in comparison of him, *every man is a liar**.

To confirm our reliance on this glorious disposition in God, let us survey a few pictures

* Rom. iii. 4.

of it recorded in sacred story. *The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head*, was a promise made soon after the fall. One hundred years elapse, and no such offspring of woman appears: another and another hundred years elapse, but no Savior still is seen. And now a thousand years are gone, without any Messiah. *Where then is the promise of his coming?* At length another thousand years run out, and a third, but no Redeemer appears. Is the Lord then *the God of Truth?* *Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one jot or tittle of his word shall pass away.* See then at the end of four thousand years, in an obscure village of Bethlehem, the long-expected Jesus born: born at the very time foretold, just before *a scepter departed from Judah**, while *the second temple stood†*, and at the four hundred and fiftieth Chaldee year from the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem‡.

Afterwards God promised to Abraham, that his posterity the Jews, should, after being *four hundred years strangers in a land that was not theirs, come out with great substance.* So we read in Genesis, and the book of Exodus tells us *that it came to pass the self-same day that the Lord did bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt by their armies; and that they came out with great spoil, with jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and with much raiment.*

The country of the Canaanites was promised to them, and as punctually bestowed. Not

* Gen. xlix. 10.

† Hagg. i. 7. Mal. iii. 1.

‡ Dan. ix.

one word failed of all that the Lord promised. And therefore Egypt delivers them up unhurt; the Red Sea opens a road to them; the wilderness with its fiery flying serpents cannot injure them; they cannot starve, though destitute of flesh and bread to eat; nor famish, though no water flows there from any spring; nor perish with cold and nakedness, though forty years unable either to make, or purchase, shoes or cloaths. The skies shall drop with new fruitfulness, and constantly supply them with an unknown victual, *Manna*. The rock of flint shall burst with water, and follow them with a flood through all their journey. Their shoes and cloaths shall not wax old, neither shall their feet swell with travelling and perpetual exposure to the weather. Does Pharaoh attempt to abolish them? He and his shall be drowned in the attempt. Does the ocean threaten them with death? Its waves thrill with the potency of God's promise to his people, and stand on an heap, as a wall of defence, while they passed through its deep channel dry-shod. Sin destroys its thousands and hundreds of thousands, but the race of the children of Israel cannot be cut off. Kings after kings, cities after cities, the men giants, the towns great and fenced up to heaven, all fell before the subjects of the promise, though they were small in number, an handful compared with their enemies, and undisciplined, and unarmed, and exhausted with fatigue and toil of forty

years continuance ; and Canaan at length becomes their's completely.

The kingdom of Israel is promised to David, and therefore is he invincible, invulnerable, and immortal, by turns, while Saul devises his destruction. The javelin out of Saul's hand, shall miss David and strike the wall. Jonathan, though charged to be his enemy, shall become his friend ; and nothing intervene between him and the promised throne.

God had promised by Jeremiah, that at the end of seventy years captivity in Babylon, the Jews should be restored, and so precisely it happened, as we read in *Daniel**. And though the tyranny and power of the Babylonians for ever seemed to forbid such a restoration, yet rather than it shall fail of an accomplishment, God will break in pieces the two-leaved gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron, every obstacle shall perish, and Babylon itself be destroyed. What reason then have we to exclaim, as in the text, O ! Lord, thou God of Truth.

But let us consider the ground and seat of the divine Truth. And first it appears to be founded in his *fore-knowledge*. Every thing that can possibly tend to divert him from fulfilling his promises, he foreknew. He was well acquainted with all our characters and conduct before he took us into his favor, and tendered his promises to us ; and therefore we may rely on his truth in performing them, not-

* Dan. ix. 2, 23.

withstanding

withstanding any occurrences whatever. Nothing was promised by him *at random*.

It is founded in his *goodness*, which seeking our happiness and delighting in it, is *gratified* and *indulged* in the fulfilling his promises to us.

It is founded in his *holiness*. For he makes no engagement but under the dictate of holiness, and therefore this attribute is a security for, not an argument against, his Truth.

It is founded in his *justice*, for the non-execution of the promises would be a kind of treachery and dishonesty to Jesus Christ, who paid the full price for our redemption. The stipulated condition of those promises having been performed by the Savior on the part of man, man has now a claim upon the divine Truth on the footing of debt and right. Neither can any thing militate against such claim, because, in the plan of mercy by Christ, the holiness and justice of God have each received divine honors, and are each completely satisfied.

The attribute before us is also founded in the *power* of God; for nothing can prevent him from doing what he pleases. And in his *wisdom*, for for some glorious design alone could he ever pledge his Truth to any one. And in his *unchangeableness*; for no motive *from without* can create alteration in him, because he is an impassible being; neither can any thing do, or be, otherwise than he permits it. And no new motive *within* God can create alteration in him; for if he is altered, it must either be for the better or for the worse; certainly not for the worse,

worse, for that would imply imperfection in him ; and the same would be implied in changing for the *better* ; because then his *first* thoughts could not have been what, as those of a perfect being they must be, the *best and perfectest possible*.

It may indeed be objected that the Almighty sometimes represents himself as *repenting*, but this can only be an human method of speaking.

Indeed *temporal* promises, made without any relation to an interest in Jesus Christ, have been generally vacated by the sins of the party to whom the promises were made ; because those promises were conditional. But for that very reason, *spiritual* promises, made with relation to an interest in Jesus Christ, never were, and never *can be* vacated, by the sins of the persons who are interested in Jesus Christ ; because in *this case* the conditionality rests not upon us, but upon Jesus Christ, by whom, as *our surety*, it hath been fully performed, and in whom, therefore, *we are complete* ; who hath for these *finished transgression, made reconciliation for iniquity, made an end of sin, and brought in an everlasting righteousness* : so that it is said, *the Lord imputeth not sin to them* ; that is, not so as to punish it *eternally*, or indeed any otherwise *in time*, but for the humbling, reclaiming, and sanctifying them. Thus God's *chastisements* are said to be not only *fatherly*, but for this particular end, *that we may be partakers of his holiness*. By the help of this distinction we
may,

may, but I see not how otherwise we can, reconcile these two passages:—the first, where God says to Eli, *I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father should walk before me for ever; but now this be far from me**; for them that honor me I will honor, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed: and the other, where Nathan speaks thus in God's name to David, *I will be his Father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men, but my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee.* Or, as it stands in the 89th Psalm, *My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him. His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven. If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments, I will visit their transgression with a rod, and their iniquity with stripes; nevertheless, my loving kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my Truth to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Hence we read, that the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his.*

Hitherto we have considered the nature and end of the divine Truth, with the several foun-

* But in another sense is this passage inapplicable to true believers, because God engages to give them always his grace, thereby preventing their apostacy, and leaving no reason or occasion for withdrawing his favor from them. See Heb. viii. 8, 9, 10.

dations on which it stands—now let us consider the *instruments* which it uses. And these are chiefly two: the *written Word*, and *Holy Spirit*. The written word of God is one great instrument or vehicle of the divine Truth: not impulses, impressions, visions, feelings, or the like, because the worst of men, manifest reprobates, have had these things; and because on this, as on other accounts, they are at least *uncertain*. It becomes not the majesty of divine Truth to use any but indisputably clear and sufficient instruments. Where the Truth of God makes over to us blessings, it is done in a way not of immediate inspiration, but of plain explicit *writings*, which our reason can contemplate coolly and with satisfaction. Satan could transform himself into an angel of light, and say, *Son, daughter, thy sins be forgiven thee*, without any such forgiveness being true; nay, when the contrary was so. For which reason is it, that St. Peter says the very *transfiguration of Christ*, and *the voice from heaven* declaring him to be the son of God, were not proofs of his mission equal to that of the *more sure word of prophecy*. Persuasions, therefore, of our acceptance with God, arising from our frames, or any thing else whatever, but the written word, are not to be admitted. And on the other hand, if the written word of God pronounces us forgiven, as it does if we *look* to Christ alone, if we *come* to him, if we *take* his benefits to ourselves, we are not to doubt such our forgiveness, let our frames or complaints be what they may,

may. Nothing is wanting to keep us steady in peace and assurance, but to regard simply and always God's written word. If that declares me justified, I am to abide by it and be happy, notwithstanding obstacles, and miseries, and guilts, and apparent impossibilities ever so many and great. Herein Abraham was contrived to be a *pattern to the faithful*; and the circumstances of his life seem to have been formed with an eye to his becoming such a pattern: *He believed in hope against hope, giving glory to God.* He neither considered his own age, nor Sarah's, but in opposition to both, because God had promised, he believed, and depended on the event, and was not disappointed.

But a much greater than Abraham hath set us the same example. For when the Son of God himself was assaulted by Satan with an *If thou be the Son of God, &c.* the manner of Satan's being foiled and overcome, we are told, was by—*It is written.* Every reply of our Lord was constantly prefaced, and no doubt for our instruction and imitation, with the same words, *It is written.*

How absurd then is it for any to wish he could know certainly whether he should be saved, and to continue praying for it in a way of expecting some sudden illapse of the Deity into him, or some very extraordinary token and mark of salvation. The rule of this knowledge is the great instrument which the Truth of God employs for this purpose, the declarations of Scripture. By these I am to be
judged

judged at the last day, by these, am I now to learn my fate at that day. Here I learn that though my sins are as scarlet, yet need that be no hindrance. All that are weary and heavy-laden, that want to get rid of the load of sin, and cannot be happy with it, are, without exception, entitled to the promises, and as such are commanded to come and take rest from the consideration of Christ's all-sufficient atonement and righteousness. Not that there is any worthiness in such feelings of the burden of sin, but because only such feel that they stand in need of a Savior, and only such are capable of enjoying one. Do I, therefore, like a tired traveller with a burden on his back, want ease and relief by the merits of Christ? God's word warrants me to believe that Jesus Christ's pardon and righteousness are open for me in particular to take them to myself and rejoice. It is not of works, but of him that calleth. I am, therefore, as being without works and ungodly, to take Christ's perfect and everlasting justification to myself, and to call myself perfectly and everlastingly righteous in him. And respecting my sins after this, it is said, if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled we are saved by his life; his life, who was dead, but is alive again; and behold he is alive for evermore. Much more then shall all our sins after believing be forgiven, than were those before. If any man sin, (not if any without exception, but if*

* Rom. ix. 11.

any *believer*, as appears both by the preceding and following verses, and by the nature of the thing itself) if any believer sin, *he has an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins. He is able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.* These two things: first, my certain acceptance on coming to Christ, by faith; and secondly, my safety and blessedness in him afterwards, are declared in the word of God. On this, which is ground enough of hope and happiness, I am to rely. And *he that believeth not, hath made God a liar. Ye believe the witness of men, the witness of God is greater. Let us trust then and not be afraid, for in the Lord Jehovah, in relying on his word, is everlasting strength.*

To make this instrument of the divine Truth the more effectual, behold, in condescension to our unaccountable unbelief, the word of God is not delivered to us a bare *declaration*, but as a *promise*; by which the Almighty puts it out of his own power to retract on any account whatever. And lest *promising* should not be sufficient, *oaths* are employed. God *swears by himself, because he can swear by no greater, that he that flees for refuge to the hope set before him**, shall be saved. And lest it should still be in his power to disappoint us, he describes his written word to us under the idea of a *covenant*†, making himself amenable, as it were, to the

* Heb. vi. 13, 18.

† Gal. iii.

laws of his creatures, as a *dishonest* being, if he fails of finally saving us under the above circumstance. All that I shall add under this head, is, that all these pains, to furnish us with a knowledge of the forgiveness of sins, plainly presuppose a difficulty in our minds both to obtain and retain such a sense of forgiveness. But the *foundation* of such difficulty would not exist, except upon the presupposition of sins, guilts, neglects, mis-improvements, coldness, and a thousand other evils. Therefore God foreknew these evils would be in us, and, by making provision that they should not shake our faith in Christ, shews that they are in the elect people of God themselves, and therefore should be no reason of our doubting *our election*, or interest in Christ.

The second instrument of the Truth of God is the *Holy Spirit*. Hence we read of *the witness of the Spirit*, and the *Spirit of Adoption*. This witness consisteth not in enthusiastic touches, nor in raptures and ecstasies, but in a rational though supernatural illumination of the understanding, by the Holy Spirit, in the knowledge of God, of Christ, of the law, and ourselves. It consisteth in a new moral and spiritual state of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit, whereby it cleaves to holiness, notwithstanding lets and impediments, in a better, higher, and more humble way, than is common to man. And it consisteth in a practice and life corresponding herewith: all the operation of the Holy Spirit. Where any one is the
object

object of the Truth of God, he has it not only revealed to him by the written word, but by the Holy Spirit thus given to him, who as the evidence of our adoption, or of our being the very children of God, is therefore called the *Spirit of Adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.*

To these two might have been annexed a *third* vehicle of the divine Truth, the symbols, or sacraments *of baptism and the Lord's supper,* but as these will require each a separate discourse to themselves, I forbear.

Let a few observations in a few words dismiss this subject.

First, The Truth of God is equally conversant about threatnings to the impenitent and unbeliever, as about promises to the penitent and believer. *That the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God, shall be accomplished equally with, Behold I lay in Zion a foundation, (the Lord Jesus Christ) and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. And they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.*

Secondly, Though *the Lord is the God of Truth,* still for many and manifest reasons he is frequently pleased to behave towards his people, as if they had no share in his Truth. Hence David in his haste cried out that *all men were lyars. Is his promise come utterly to an end, and clean gone for evermore?* So the Syrophœnician woman was long detained from that answer of peace, to which by faith she had right, and which at length she received from our
O Lord.

Lord. Tarry thou, therefore, the Lord's leisure; be strong; and he shall comfort thy heart, all ye that put your trust in the Lord.

Thirdly, The Truth of God is pledged for the fulfilment of the largest possible promises, suited to every possible condition in this life. It is the province of prayer and faith to sue them out. *Put me in remembrance*, says God. *Plead with me. Concerning the work of my hands command ye me. Ye shall ask what ye will, in Christ's name, (or on his account) and it shall be given you. Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.* But particular respect is had to that season, when comfort from God is the only one that will suffice us. *When thou passest through the water I will be with thee. When flesh and heart fail, God is the strength of my heart.* When we pass over Jordan, the river of death, which washes the kingdom of Canaan, or Heaven, and fix our eye on the ark Jesus Christ, the spiritual Joshua will be especially, and remarkably, though invisibly, present, to make the waters stand on an heap, and to prevent their overwhelming us with horror eternal. As it is said, *I will never leave thee nor forsake thee*; in consequence of which, *though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death we shall fear no evil; for thy rod and thy staff they comfort us. Into thy hands, therefore, we shall joyfully commit our spirits, for thou hast redeemed us, O! Lord, GOD OF TRUTH.*

END OF THE TENTH SERMON.

OF THE IMPORTANCE OF
REGENERATION.

S E R M O N XI.

J O H N iii. 3.

*Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily,
I say unto thee, except a Man be born again,
he cannot see the Kingdom of God.*

LATE in the evening, when it was not possible to distinguish faces, came Nicodemus, a Ruler of the Jews, to our Lord. The visit was paid at the risque of the Ruler's character; but so sincere and ardent was his desire of spiritual instruction, that if he dared not wait upon Christ by *day*, through fear of the Jews, he must at all events do it by *night*. *Rabbi*, (said he) *we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.* What? Does he call the despised Jesus by the honorable stile and title of *Rabbi*, placing him on the same bench with the most eminent Jewish
O 2 doctors,

doctors, or rather far above them all ? Does he reverence that Son of God whom others rejected ? And does he do more ? Does he acquaint him with the private and real sentiments of his brethren the Pharisees, almost to a degree of violating honor and faithfulness—*WE know* (says he) and it is from policy and bigotry that we will not publicly *own*, that thou art an extraordinary Interpreter of Divine Truth sent immediately from God. For no man can interrupt and controul universal nature by a single breath of command, unless he were sent from God.

This was the modest, dutiful, and pious manner in which Nicodemus began to address our Lord. And what he was going to *add* we know not ; but before he could utter a word more, before he could *finish his sentence*, our Savior violently stops him, and says, without the least preface or connection, *Verily, verily I say unto you, except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.* What words these that must seem like so many blows struck at the heart of Nicodemus though a stranger, and, what we should esteem, a worthy man ; whose behavior was so decent and charming ; whose very idea of visiting Christ was an effort of goodness struggling against great disadvantages ; whose errand plainly appears to be from the best of motives and dispositions, to know the divine method of salvation ; whose rank also was highly respectable, being that of a Ruler, one that had the power of life and death

death over others ; whose character, both as a member of the Sanhedrim, and as *a Pharisee*, must needs have been remarkably strict, distinguished by an uncommon abundance in acts of public and private worship, and by charities in particular ; for when our Lord personates a Pharisee, he says, *even the half of my goods I give to the poor.*

It is something greatly deserving the profoundest attention of the whole world, to find a man like this treated by our Savior, who was infinitely mild, with any appearance of abruptness, and accosted as one who had occasion for a change so entire as that of a New Birth. It must imply that, however Nicodemus believed Jesus to be the Christ, however amiable, pious and charitable he was, though he was most regular and precise in all the duties of humanity and devotion, attached to Christ so as to yield him due homage and affection, incurring *dangers* for him, and acknowledging that, however he might be able, accustomed, and authorized to teach others, he himself wanted, and humbly sought, instruction from Christ ; still was Nicodemus essentially wrong in judgment, and totally deficient at heart, so as to need, equally with the most abandoned criminal, *to be born again*. For what more could have been said to the most hardened wretch that ever lived, than was applied to Nicodemus ? That, he must be (in a moral sense) *entirely begotten and framed again* ; that without it he was, notwithstanding all his

O 3

shining

shining qualities and virtues, in an undone state, and incapable of heaven's bliss, being not yet *born*, not yet an *infant* or an *entity* in true goodness—it remained for him still to become (*καὶ πάλιν γενέσθαι*) *a new creation*. It was, as if our Lord had said to such a man as Nicodemus, on beginning to converse with him, Tell me nothing of your belief of my Messiahship, profess, and do, and be, what you may, Nicodemus, I can have no concern with you, nor can you have any interest in me, unless *you are born again*. If you come to me to learn, this is the alphabet of my doctrine. A teacher of others you may be, but need yourself the first elements of knowledge, unless you have learnt Regeneration. Without this, all is to be unlearnt which you have hitherto acquired yourself, and instilled into others. Without Regeneration there is no possibility in the nature of things of salvation.

Infinite was (as we might naturally expect) the confusion and amazement of Nicodemus, at a reception almost rude as this was; and sensible, as he must be, of some unknown and immense necessity for it, from a character like Jesus. Overwhelmed with surprize, then, at dictates like these, from the mouth of authority too high for him to suspect or dispute, he asks in agitation and distress this ridiculous question: *How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born?* He understood that in a natural sense which he could not understand in a moral one.

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For of any further *moral* Regeneration he thought he had no need, being already a regular and exemplary man. The *change from bad to good* he already had experienced, unless indeed he had always been sober and well disposed; and a change *from good to better* would be only an *increase* of the *same* principles and habits which he was now exercising, and not a *totally new* mental creation, like being born a second time. And it was impossible our Lord should mean, that a man must be altered from *virtuous to vicious* as preparatory to an heavenly state. He was confounded with the unintelligible doctrine of a New Birth, and could form no tolerable conception of it.

What? cannot Nicodemus, an expounder of the Law, and doubtless a man of letters and sense, comprehend Regeneration: *Art thou a master in Israel, and knowest not these things?* Perhaps it was taught in an obscure and ill-adapted method. No! *The only wise God our Savior* was the person inculcating it. We can expect therefore little else, when men, weak and fallible men inculcate it, but that it should fail of being immediately or easily understood, even by men of science and abilities. Nor is a difficulty of perceiving its meaning the least proof that it is wrongly stated, or improperly urged, but of the contrary.

Also, one should think it very alarming to find, as in the case of Nicodemus, that some of the best of men to all appearance, sincere and no hypocrites, may seem to make some

progress, as well as great profession, in religion, may be blameless, useful, and ornamental to society, and the instructors of others in goodness, and yet be in so dreadful a state of destitution of true goodness, as to need even a *Regeneration*; and what is more, much more, not have the least *apprehension* of their destitution; not have the least suspicion that they are *radically* wrong.

Nor is it less alarming to find, that, though we may be ever so sincere, as Nicodemus was, and unable to provide for what we ought to be, by not imagining that we *need* any thing essentially better than what we have and are, still will this be no safety, no excuse for us. For though Nicodemus had never heard of *Regeneration*, yet if he had not obtained it, he could not have been saved. *Except a man be born again, he cannot* (says Christ) *enter into the kingdom of God.* A man, without a true and high *musical genius*, could not enjoy a musical world, where instruments were always sounding in his ears, and where harmony was the business and sole study of the inhabitants of that world. There would be an impossibility in the nature of things for such an one to enjoy his situation; and the reflection, that such a world of music would never break up, but that he must always for ever abide in it, would be a sentence of eternal misery passed on him. In this manner it is, as will further appear, by attending to what follows hereafter on the *nature* of *Regeneration*, that the impossibility of

of enjoying heaven, without Regeneration, whether we are apprized of it or not, is a thing of the same sort with the impossibility of happiness in a world, where we want a suitableness to the temper, studies, and pleasures of it. The impossibility is founded not on the divine severity or arbitrariness, but *in the nature of things*. How greatly then does it follow, that in hoping well either of others, or of our own state, we should not regard what in general passes for goodness, as a sufficient ground of charitable or sanguine sentiments, unless there be some reason to conclude, or to imagine, that ourselves or others *are Regenerate*. This is the main point to which our decisions should be referred. For *there is a way that seemeth right to a man*, says the Holy Ghost, *but the end thereof* (exactly as we find it in this story) *are the ways of death**. And, *there is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness†*.

Is it not amazing, not only that the New Birth should be the *first* topic on which our Lord discoursed with the Ruler, immediately as he entered the room, but that our Lord should not begin upon it without a strong form of *asseveration*; and that asseveration *repeated*, in order, plainly, to communicate the most affecting sense of the high importance of the doctrine. *Verily*, said the Redeemer, (*Ἀμὲν†*) a word expressive of *stability* and *fixed certainty*.

* Prov. xiv. 12.

† Prov. xxx. 12.

‡ From *σταβιλίω*, firmavit,

As if he had said, it is immutably settled, and nothing can reverse it, that *except a man, be he Jew or Christian, is born again, he cannot be saved.* *Verily*, it is so—if any credit is due to me, you may rest most assured of it.

What occasion was there to use an affirmation strong and vehement as this was, *Verily?* and what occasion afterwards to repeat it? *Verily, verily*, I say unto you?—It was certainly foreseen, that there was something in this doctrine not likely to gain a ready entrance into the human mind: something that would meet with disbelief, in general, in the world. We are, therefore, not to wonder if Regeneration be a subject neither understood nor believed, but are to expect it. And hence we find it explained away, and ridiculed in the world. Let him, however, who presumes to divert himself with what our Lord thought proper never to express but with the last degree of seriousness and solemnity, remember, that it is possible he may find that the same Jesus, when he comes to *judge* each of us, and to fix our fates for eternity, may not unsay at that time what he urged here on earth with so much exertion and strenuousness, and for the truth and necessity of which he pledged his word and honor. It is possible that he may not choose to have that subject, which he had treated as of all others the most sacred and important, exposed to the wanton wit and impertinence of any. We are forewarned, by God himself in our nature, that *except a man be born again, he cannot be saved;*

saved ; it will be our wisdom to credit and to conform to the monition : it must be at our peril to despise or neglect it.

How greatly true must these reflections be, if we consider, that it was not enough for our Lord to declare with sensible *emotion*, the impossibility of acceptance without renovation, but he must express it in terms that imply (v. 5.) a man *cannot enter*, cannot set foot upon, cannot have the least and lowest place, or any place at all in the kingdom of grace *here* without this change, *much less in the kingdom of glory hereafter*. For, by the expression *kingdom of God*, is meant, *present grace* ; for we read *the kingdom of God is within you*. And in the verse of the text 'tis said, *he cannot see the kingdom of God without being born again*. He can have no idea or apprehension what it is. He is the most absolute stranger not only to the possession, but to the very *imagination* of true goodness. So we discover it to be in 1 Cor. ii. *The natural man does not discern, neither can he know the things of the spirit*. Whatever, therefore, our honesty, decency, regularity, religiousness, and charitableness may be, without a New Birth we have not received one truly gracious thought or notion. Though the actions we have performed be right ones, and well-deserving, for their usefulness, at the hands of *men*, and the contrary to them, as injurious to society, had been justly punishable, still, in the sight of God, and respecting the true

true *morality* or *goodness* of these actions, they, like our other actions not reputed good, are equally destitute of genuine virtue, or piety, unless we are regenerate. Accordingly it is said, *They that are in the flesh cannot please God. They are not subject to his law, neither indeed can be**. They must be born of the Spirit first. Some animals can imitate the voice, and others use the gestures, and others have the erect figure and walk, of a man, but they are brute beasts still; and their operations, though just the same as they would perform in the same circumstances if reasonable creatures, are yet at the highest and best, as in the elephant, irrational still. We must be essentially altered; the corrupt tree may bring forth *specious* fruit, but it must be made a *good* tree, before it can produce good fruit.

It is as if the necessity of this change were never enough to be inculcated, if we may judge by the concern which our Lord discovered in urging the belief of it. He thinks it not sufficient to use fervency in asserting it, but he must employ again the same asseverations in explaining its nature as in declaring its importance. The breath of his former asseverations was hardly cool, before they are renewed by him a third and a fourth time. *Verily, verily* (said he) a third and a fourth time, on this occasion, except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he must perish. It is as if the doctrine was far less likely to be believed or regarded than any other whatever. It is as if he took

* Rom. viii. 8.

fire at the sense of this in view of its immediate connection with our eternal happiness. Regeneration must not be mentioned by our Lord in any common method, but in a way of all others at once the most assuring and alarming to mankind. It must not be uttered but in forms that tend to *electrify* the hearer's heart. Truth itself in the person of Christ (whose bare word had been more weighty than all the oaths of all the holy beings in the universe together) cannot think of describing any thing so momentous as the New Birth, without the most awful asseverations doubled and redoubled upon it.

Nor is this all—our Lord is not satisfied with asserting the reality and necessity, and with explaining the nature, of Regeneration in this vehement manner, but he proceeds to alledge the *reason* of the thing. *That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.* As if he had said, Plainly, Nicodemus, while you are yet merely born of the flesh, while you are yet unchanged to spiritual, the principles of your heart are too low for connection and commerce with your Maker. And as a man is either in a fleshly or in a spiritual state, and you are in a fleshly one, therefore all your actions, however beautiful and devout, are only works of the flesh†. The effect cannot rise higher than the cause,

† The *eleventh article of religion*, entitled, *Of Works done before Justification*, is here exactly in point. *Works done before the grace of God, and without the inspiration of the Spirit, are not pleasant to*
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not the streams be pure, where the source is polluted. Your virtues are like artificial flowers, which however resembling real ones, are, because destitute of odor and vegetative life, no flowers at all. Nay more, because there is no truce nor toleration between flesh and spirit, but a perfect contrariety of one to the other, as our Lord says of them, *these two are contrary the one to the other*, therefore the true principles of your heart, being fleshly and not spiritual, are contrary and inimical to God. There is not the least true *civility* to him in your very piety. And if you knew the holiness of his nature, how opposite it is to, and disdainful of, your best deeds, observe them as he does in their root and elements, and blinded as he is even from noticing them, not only by their quality, but by the evil of the sins you commit; if you knew these things sufficiently, and that this aversion of God from you was infinite, because flowing from his high moral excellence and love to goodness; you would soon perceive, and strongly feel, *an enmity* to him. So it is written, *the carnal* (that is, the *fleshly*) *mind is enmity against God*†. The best you can produce in unregeneracy, Nicodemus, is flesh, enmity, sin. That inoffensiveness of life you now show is only by virtue of a secret and invisible restraint put upon your nature. The tyger may be

God; forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ; yea rather, for that they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but they have the nature of sin.

† Rom. viii.

harmless

harmless and pleasing in his den, but release him and his proper disposition will appear. The magnet may support iron, but remove that force, and it falls. Believe me, Nicodemus, however strange and incredible it may seem, the thoughts and imaginations of your heart are evil, and only evil, and that continually. Even *your mind and conscience are defiled*. You must be *born again, of water and of the Spirit*, not merely of *baptism**, but of that

* Some have thought that baptism, which our church expressly calls *only an outward and visible sign, not an inward and spiritual grace*, is Regeneration. *That inward and spiritual grace* indeed is Regeneration, but of this baptism is only a *sign, not the thing itself*. For it is *contrary to fact*, that children are better *after*, as they must be if regenerated *in*, baptism; for the same tempers precisely shew themselves in children both before and after baptism, as every one may observe. Being born of *water and of the Holy Ghost*, is an *endiadys*, like what we find in another place, *fire and the Holy Ghost*, the water in the one case like the fire in the other, being only intended to express the purifying nature of the operations of the Holy Spirit. For if two things instead of one were meant hereby, then our Lord ought in explaining them both, to have mentioned both, and to have given a reason as much why men ought to be born again of *water* as of the Spirit, whereas concerning the latter only he says, *that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit*; plainly because this comprehends the other, or being born of the Spirit, is that of which water from its cleansing nature is a fit emblem, and only an emblem. Again, if the water here spoken of be not thus metaphorical, but means baptism, it will follow, that all infants, and heathens, and others, dying unbaptized by *water*, are lost, which, I think, nobody can believe to be true. There is no reason in the nature of things that a man, unless he is born of baptismal water as well as of the Spirit, should be lost, as the context supposes there is concerning the water *it* speaks of, namely, the purifying agency of the Spirit. Indeed the mistake seems to have arisen from misconceiving the metaphorical application by the ancient fathers of the word Regeneration to baptism, who were generally accustomed to call this initiatory rite of Christianity by the name of a New Birth, in respect

that purification of soul, of which baptism is only *the outward and visible* SIGN; and of which purification, not your own human efforts but *the Spirit* must be the author. Till you are thus washed, as it were, by water, by the Holy Spirit, your performances are all of an improper *kind*, they are all contaminated and polluted in their very idea; there is a worm in the bud, and rottenness at the root of your very virtue and piety.

Do these things seem mystical and unintelligible? They were so to Nicodemus from the mouth of our Lord himself. This effect of wonder and confusion on having the nature or importance of regeneracy stated to us, is what we are taught by Nicodemus's behavior, always to expect as a thing of course. He appears to be, at this kind of conversation, all amazement, perplexity, and infidelity. Whereupon our Lord adds, MARVEL NOT, *that I said unto you, ye must be born again.* We may naturally enough suppose the Ruler's eyes to be sometimes fastened on our Lord, sometimes on the ground, and sometimes lifted up to heaven in

respect principally to those heathens, who, upon being changed from the worship of idols to that of Jesus, seemed to be *new creatures*, formed and made again. By this means, at length, Regeneration became synonymous with baptism. In which sense it is also used by our church in the office for that sacrament, though not without being sufficiently guarded by express stipulations, and in the Catechism by a direct explanation, as will be shewn hereafter in a discourse on that ordinance. *Simon Magus* himself received baptismal asperision of water from the hands of Apostles themselves, and yet was unregenerate, *in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.* Acts viii. 23.

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the mingled acts of contemplation and consternation. His astonishment was extreme, at the idea of all being nothing which he had hitherto done, of his righteousness being only sin in the dress of righteousness, of his sincerity and seriousness proceeding only from corrupt nature, and of his needing equally with publicans and harlots a change like this of a New Birth.

How elaborate is Christ on this head ! He first presses the subject before any other, and prefaces it with words of the most weighty and affecting import. These words he repeats. Then he throws some farther light on the subject, but still again prefixes the same form of affirmation and asseveration in explaining its nature, which he had used before in asserting its importance. Afterwards he proceeds to shew the necessity for Regeneration, man without it being merely fleshly, and *that which is born of the flesh* being only able to produce works of the flesh. Next he urges the doctrine in direct terms, notwithstanding the Ruler's immense surprize, and concludes with, what shall be the conclusion of this discourse, an illustration or picture of Regeneration : *the wind, or air. The wind, says he, bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth : so is every one that is born of the Spirit.* As if he had said, you cannot understand the nature, but this is no reason why you should not believe the existence, of Regeneration. For

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you cannot understand the nature and laws of wind, why a sudden gust rises here, goes there, continues such a time, and then expires : but this is no reason for doubting the *existence* of the wind ; which, because we hear the sound, and feel the effect, of it, every one believes to exist. *So is every one that is born of the Spirit*, namely, a character that really exists, as is plain from its effects, and is therefore to be believed to exist, howsoever unable we may be to conceive what and how it is to be regenerate.

Wind, or air, was a very proper resemblance for our Lord to use on this occasion, on two accounts ; because, what air is to the natural life, that without which none of its functions can be performed, and the principle on which they all depend, such is the Spirit's influence to the moral life, that without which none of its virtues can be exercised, and the essence from which they all proceed. *Without air* or breath, indeed, a skeleton or dead corpse is the same man, for shape and make, as *with* it ; but there is no *vitality* : it is all a mere mass of inanimate matter. So *without inspiration from above*, (a continuity of which is Regeneracy) it is the same outward man, and the religious exterior has the same shape and make, as it were, as *with* it ; but there is no *spirituality* ; it is all a mere mass of lifeless *resemblance* to virtue and goodness, and no more. Again. The wind bloweth where it listeth. And so does the author of Regeneration influence and inspire whom he pleaseth. *May*
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he not do what he will with his own? Can the Æthiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Without the Spirit, who quickeneth, we can do nothing. It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. From him comes our will if good, to him therefore belongs the glory. Consequently, if we *will* regeneration, if we truly desire it, it is from him; and as he cannot deny himself, or act in a self-contradictory manner, therefore we shall obtain it. So we read, *every one that asketh receiveth, he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.* As motion and will are marks of the natural life, so are desires of the spiritual, or of regeneration, wherever they are found. They are in that soul the first part, though very inconsiderable perhaps and small, of that endless line of grace, which will be lengthening out in one unbroken thread to all eternity. They are, though dark, yet the day-break, of the same nature with, what it proceeds continually to amount to, twilight, morning, and, at length, everlasting noon.

END OF THE ELEVENTH SERMON.

OF THE NATURE OF REGENERATION.

S E R M O N XII.

JOHN iii. 3.

Verily, verily I say unto thee, except a Man be born of the Spirit, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.

HITHERTO we have observed only the *Importance* of Regeneration; come we now to enquire into its *Nature*, or *what it is*, and *wherein it consists*. And here, considering the unavoidable perdition of every one who dies without Regeneration, the greatest possible precision and even *demonstration* are necessary.

There seems no possibility of mistake in this subject, if we attend to the following method of investigating it.

First, It is matter of fact, it is a public notoriety, which every well-disposed observer may see, that there are persons in the world very different from the rest of mankind, and from their former selves : upon whom all that know them

them know so great a moral change has passed, not only their *understandings* being essentially altered, but their *affections*, and the *general course of their actions*, that from the extent hereof they may be fitly called *new men, born again*. And such is the manifest superiority of their goodness to that of the rest of the world, and, what is more, such is the perfect CONTRARIETY of their goodness to that of the rest of the world, and to the principles of mere human nature, that they cannot be born again by their own acts and exertions, but must plainly be so born *of the Spirit*. Their supernatural change can be ascribed to no other author.

Then, secondly, we will examine these *living instances* of the New Birth, *by the properties ascribed in Holy Scripture to being born again*; to which properties if those living instances agree, they must infallibly be *the born again*, as much as that must be a square or circle, which has the properties of a square or circle.

In the next place it will be seen, how this account of Regeneration, thus taken from *life* and equally from Scripture, exactly agrees to the circumstances of the story of the text, and to the frequent use, in other parts of Scripture, of the words *flesh* and *Spirit*, by contrasting which our Lord endeavors to give *Nicodemus* an idea of the necessity for this second creation. By this process of reasoning it seems impossible to err in our enquiries concerning *the New Birth*.

First then, we can need no better comment on the New Birth than the *living one*, of num-

berless persons, who manifestly *have experienced* it; who are sensible of it themselves, and make it sensible to all who candidly converse with them. I shall endeavor to mark out and distinguish them in the following manner.

There are four principles which are confessedly natural to man, namely, *Self-love, Pride, Self-dependency, and Sin.* And the very *goodness* of men does not rise above these principles, but is either positively *founded* in, or compatible with, them. But there are men also in the world, who have been so changed, as there-upon suddenly to contract purer and opposite principles to these; and this renovation in them lasts *always*, notwithstanding all opposition, to their dying day. The *strength*, as well as depth and extent, and other qualities of it, prove it *divine*.

All the world are performing the acts of their several religions from a principle of *self-love*. This hath been justly called by an Ethic poet and philosopher, the *master-passion in each human breast, which, like Aaron's rod, swallows up the rest.* They seek, and hope to obtain, the divine favor, by their moral and pious actions. Take away the expected *happy issue* of their labors, and they will use them no more. They will give themselves no farther trouble about duty. So that they do not intrinsically love *piety and virtue*, but merely the *gain and profits* they produce. And thus their good actions are all manifestly *venal*, and entered upon for the sake of *convenience*. Neither can they be con-
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vinced of the wrongness of this plan, though no one thing whatever, and least of all piety and virtue, can properly be said to be loved, unless it be loved and followed *for its own sake*: and though there is no occasion for this manner of performing duties for the sake of *saving our souls*, there being an officer on purpose set up by the Almighty *to save us*, JESUS, the God-Savior, as his name imports.

Opposite to this kind of goodness, as well as strikingly superior to it, is that of some thousands scattered up and down in the world. Theirs is a piety and virtue *not* founded in self-love, but cleaving thereto without any idea of reward, purely and heartily for their *own sake*. For, make them but holy, and you make them happy. Free them but from sin, and you give them an heaven upon earth.

They never permit the thought to stay in their minds, of *securing salvation* by this means. Salvation they receive as the *free*, and independent, and unalienable *gift of God* to any sinners that will accept it, *through Jesus Christ our Lord*. *Hell* very seldom occurs to their minds as a terrifying motive to religion, and is *never* approved of, but always abhorred, in this light. And equally do they disapprove and abhor the imagination of *gaining heaven* by their good qualities and performances. Name any one *grace* and spiritual temper, and instantly they desire it, or name any one *sin*, and immediately they perceive a temper which flees from it, without any relation to *heaven* or *hell*. And,

what shews the purity of their love to God and goodness beyond any thing else, and what the Scripture largely insists upon, is this: if they meet with any one, friend or stranger, of their own, or of any other party, rich or poor, wise or weak, if he is but a really *godly man*, they love him *as such*; and love him in a manner, after which they are unable to love the dearest acquaintance or kin they have, if ungodly. An argument this, which, as it proves how they love religion not from self-interest but *for its own sake*, shows, that they love *God* for his own sake, distinctly from the idea of being interested in his mercy. For, if they thus love holiness and grace in their *fellow-creatures*, they must also thus love the same qualities in *God*. And, as they are constantly observed proportionally to love, and honor, and envy, their fellow-creatures, as they find them more excellent and spiritual, they must, therefore, clearly have a disposition to love, and honor *supremely* the *fountain* of all goodness, the Almighty, independently of all thoughts of his favor to them.

If it be said, these persons, finding a *pleasure* in religion, do *therefore* prosecute it, and, consequently, prosecute it *from self-love* as much as others; I answer, *Not so*. They have a *previous taste* and *relish* for, and approbation of goodness, which is the only reason of their being made happy thereby. Their minds see a beauty and excellency in goodness, which is the *ground* of their desiring, and being happy
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in it. As it is universally, whatever we cordially embrace, it can only be on the supposition of its appearing to our minds as so far to us then desirable and excellent.

How *pure* is this kind of goodness not founded in self-love; and how *contrary* to that corrupt principle in the breast of every man by nature. It could, therefore, never be introduced into man by *himself*. It belongs to the work of another being, the Holy Spirit. Such a man, therefore, whose goodness is not only thus fundamentally *better* than, but *opposite* to, that of all others, is *born again*, and *of the Spirit*—which will the more appear, as we consider self-love in this *more general* exercise of it. All men by nature think, when they have gone through the religious acts due from them to their Maker, that most, if not all, the acts of their life are then left to their own discretion, provided always that no sin be thereby permitted. Hence it is, that they go here and there, do this thing and the other, *because they chuse it*. Thus the greater part of their lives, all remaining above their devotions, is devoted to *self*. On the other hand, the persons, who humbly claim to be *born of the Spirit*, give this evidence of it, that they seek to do nothing as the dictate of their own wills, but desire, habitually and practically, and, where they come short, are ashamed and unhappy, to be directed in all things secular as well as sacred, by the *will of God*. They wish to consider themselves as no longer *their own*, but wholly *his that bought*

bought them; and that their own will may be thwarted and defeated, and only that of God prevail.

Pride is another, not merely *infirmity*, and *occasional* weakness of man, but the *very foundation and support of his goodness*. For so it must be, if *self-love* is: because there would be no room, or opportunity, for the exercises of self-love in the respects above described, were it not for *pride*, or *thinking more highly of ourselves than we ought to think*. No one who thought soberly of himself either as a creature, or as a sinner, much less as the accumulative sinner, which the best man, in various respects, is, could presume on obtaining the divine favor by any thing *he* could do. We need but consider how high and grand a thing the divine favor is, and how low and mean, in relation to it, must be our performances, all the virtue of which too must be wholly derived from God, we need but consider this to see the *pride*, the *arrogance*, there must be in confiding in our own actions, as the procuring cause of the divine favor. And yet, so universal is this temper of pride, that it pervades all of all religions in the world, and inflates every creature under the sun with an idea, that, more or less, his *Maker* is subject to *him*, or that the complacency of the Supreme Being is dependent on something in him. All men think, that some self-denial, or devotion of theirs, will avail to the cancelling, in some measure, the guilt of
their

their sins, and to the securing their eternal happiness.

Opposite to this sentiment, directly opposite to it, is that of thousands of persons, who, at the pinnacle of human attainments, think of themselves as groveling, and creeping only on the earth, in goodness. *All their righteousnesses appear to them but as filthy rags**; and as *dung†*, though the very best of human righteousness. And with deep aversion and contempt they abominate all ideas of obtaining or securing the divine mercy, by what *they* can suffer or do. In nothing do they *trust* or *glory*, *save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ*. Every day, though pressing after perfection, they grow humbler in their own eyes; less and less able every hour to venture into the divine presence, on the footing of their own personal merits. If they are sensible of growing in nothing else, they perceive their advancement in this, *self-loathing*. How contrary this to man's own nature, the better he is, and the more he does, to be thinking of himself *more meanly*. And to be less able to hope from his own excellencies, in proportion as, *comparatively* speaking, he has the more reason. Apostacy from God originated in pride: how is it thus counteracted, how is the soul thus manifestly returned to God, and renewed by him, where a principle like this, so contrary to human haughtiness, is superinduced. Such men there are, who are

* Is. lxi. 6.

† Phil. iii. 8.

thus

thus self-evidently and distinguishingly *born of the Spirit*.

Self-dependency is a temper how corruptly natural to man. For all men by nature think it is *they themselves* that give the *turn* to their own actions; that if they differ from others, it is partly owing to their own *endeavors*—and that if they *persevere*, it is partly owing to their own peculiar activity, or watchfulness and seriousness. *They* can repent, *they* can amend, *they* can believe, *they* can improve grace, and God is to do the rest; to supply only what is wanting, or to lend his assistance: He will not be deficient to *us*, if we are not deficient to ourselves; these and a thousand similar sentiments of self-dependency are innate in us all.

Perfectly opposite to these ideas are such as are entertained by numberless persons in the world. That it is God alone that gives the turn to their characters, and *makes them to differ* from the very worst that are: that it is *not of him that willeth*, nor of *him that runneth*, but of *God that sheweth mercy*, from whom comes all the good efficacy of motives, and every good and perfect gift: that if ever they are *confirmed unto the end*, it is the work of God, who, *having begun a good work* in them, must, and alone can, *complete it*. That they are *not sufficient of themselves so much as to think a good thought*: that instead of improving grace they should wholly extinguish it, if forsaken and abandoned to themselves: that it is God *who worketh all in all*: that advanced how far soever they may

may be in virtue and grace, though possessed of faith, and exercised in a kind of habit of goodness, they dare not trust themselves one moment with themselves, but are wholly living out of themselves upon *the strong for strength*. Neither do they think themselves *machined*, as it were, in this method. It appears fit and right to them that the *great ALL* should be treated as such, and that the creature, who could not exist of himself, nor can preserve his own being one moment, should sensibly behave like one who is thus empty in himself, and esteem it the highest felicity to be always receiving every thing from God, and never presuming to imagine an independency of him. By this means *he that glorieth, glories in the Lord*. And thus as, in the forementioned dispositions, first to *center in God* as lovely in himself, for his holiness and moral excellency; and secondly, to think *humly* of one's self, so in this third principle of dependency on God always for every thing, there is manifestly laid the foundation of God's being the only and eternal happiness of a creature; that is, of heaven—all which is *prevented* from taking place by that opposite kind of goodness, the only one so natural to man, which is founded in *self-love, pride, and self-dependency*. So that such a goodness does of itself, and in its own nature, shut men out of heaven, because it plainly makes it *morally* impossible to us. It furnishes us with principles destructive of those
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which are the foundation of heaven's holy, humble blifs.

All that I shall add under this head is, that seeing *self-dependency*, like *pride*, and *self-love*, are manifestly principles but too rooted in us all, and consist, as they do with, and even support, our very *goodness and virtue*, those men (for such there are, and their number out of all ages and countries, is *a multitude which no man can number*) whose goodness, and *general frame of heart and life*, is far better than what is natural to man, and even *contrary* to it, must be supernaturally thus wrought upon, must be self-evidently and distinguishingly *born of the Spirit*.

Sin is the last of the four particulars, by which I have chosen to discriminate the *born of the Spirit* from those who are merely *born of the flesh*. The goodness of man by nature, as observation will shew to any one, gives, however self-contradictory it may seem, a kind of licence and impunity to sin of the fainter kind. This kind of sin, it is thought, is connived at and tolerated, in some measure, by the Supreme Being, insomuch that he will take no notice of it, but, that notwithstanding it, persons may make themselves easy and quiet, on account of their conceived goodness in other and in most things. At least, if their goodness does not very visibly consist with lesser sins in *this* sense, it does in *another*. For they can think themselves tolerably good, and expect to be so esteemed by others, though they have attained only

only to a freedom from *gross* sins, (which freedom also is in general imputable to these persons having from new circumstances, little or no *temptation* to, or occasion for, those gross sins, neither will their *reputation* perhaps allow of them) but are not at war with *all* sin, with secret sins of thought and heart; they are not studious to be cleansed from all the least remains of sin. This is not their care and solicitude. They are good without it. Or if these persons are at war with all sin, as they think, it is not with sin *as sin*, but from the idea of thereby qualifying themselves for the divine acceptance and regard.

Opposite to this is the heart of multitudes in the world, who have implanted into them a new principle to which they were strangers before, (as they were to the three former ones of *centring in God, humbleness of mind, and dependency on God*) a principle of repugnance to *all sin as such*. They do not reflect thus: such a sin will send me to hell if I indulge it, and therefore I will oppose it; but they have a temper which mourns over it without any immediate consideration of hell as its punishment. Nay, being by faith delivered from that punishment, and from all danger of it, they still habitually fight against sin, as much as they would do if their eternal safety depended thereon. They love grace and godliness *simply*, and desire it *purely*, having a new nature which can be happy in nothing so much as in holiness, and, consequently, they pray against sin simply,
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and avoid it purely, as that which does violence to their new regenerate nature. Hence they oppose *all sin*, *little* as well as *great*, of *heart* as well as of *life*, and fail not, day by day, to cry to God for entire deliverance from it. And the higher these persons rise in goodness the less licence and impunity do they allow to lesser sins. Their conscience grows more exquisitely tender to feel pain at the least touches of secret pride, or worldliness, in proportion as they grow in religion. All sin is now their burden, the great misery of their life. Their continual sensation is, *O! wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death.*

Can any reasonable man doubt, but that persons having this radical opposition to sin as sin, so natural as sin is to man and inbred in him, must, on this account, be self-evidently and distinguishingly *born again, and of the Holy Spirit*; especially when it is considered, that besides *this* mark, they possess (to mention no more) *three others*, all of which are not natural to man, but *vastly superior*, and even CONTRARY to what are natural to man.

A doubt in this case will be less possible still, if we consider that from this examination it appears, that these persons are changed to such a degree in their *understandings, affections, and actions*, as fully denominates the man new-born.

And the change of the affections shews not only how totally the man is changed, but that
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this change in his understanding is a much higher thing than mere alteration in judgement: for both the heart is changed herewith, and also the life and manners.

Neither is this change liable to the charge of *enthusiasm*, or of heat of imagination without the direction of reason. For this transmutation is both strictly moral and *rational*. For nothing can be more moral and rational, than that a creature should center in his Creator, and think lowly of himself, and depend on his Creator for all, and abhor whatever is bad.

But we engaged at the beginning of this discourse to learn out, whether the properties ascribed in Scripture to Regeneration, were such as agree to the supposed picture of it in the living instances which have now been examined: and it was then said, that if such properties really agreed to Regeneration, as it exists in these living instances, their Regeneration must be the real and true one, as much as that is a real and true circle or square, which has the peculiar properties of a circle or square.

A real and pure love to religion for its own sake, as opposed to the cultivation of it *for convenience and from necessity*, was one branch of their character. And one evidence of this genuine love to religion, was the pure, habitual, and practical love of all of every class and denomination who are religious, as being such.

Correspondently to this mark we read, that *the NEW MAN* (that is, the *Regenerate*) *is created AFTER GOD* (who doubtless loves holiness *purely*)

ly) in righteousness and TRUE holiness*, as contra-distinguished from an *apparent*, but *false* holiness, like the fictitious goodness above described. And, *by this we know that we have passed from death unto life* (that is, are regenerate) BECAUSE WE LOVE THE BRETHREN†. And, *by this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep his commandments‡*. So again, souls are said to be purified through the Spirit (or born again of water and of the Spirit) unto unfeigned love of the brethren§ : and every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him. Hence, says our Lord, it is nothing extraordinary, nothing therefore which can require a birth from the Holy Spirit to perform, when we act upon the principles of self-love. *If ye love them that love you, what thanks have you? For sinners also do thus*. And Satan intimates, that God himself must allow, that if Job served him, or was religious, for the sake of interest, it was a contemptible service. *Doth Job serve God for nought?* says he. *Smite him*, says the father of lies, in such a particular manner, *and he will curse thee to thy face*. Shewing truly enough, though with a misapplication to righteous Job, that under this selfish goodness lay concealed a principle capable of even cursing God to his face. I DELIGHT in the law of God after the inward man, says the regenerate Paul, speaking of himself as such, in opposition to a remaining lurking principle of evil, contradicting and retarding him as such¶.

* Eph. iv. 24.

§ 1 Pet. i. 22.

† 1 John iii. 14.

¶ Rom. vii. 22.

‡ 1 John v. 2.

He who is of the bond-woman is born after the flesh, but he who is of the FREE-WOMAN is BORN AFTER THE SPIRIT, says the epistle to the *Galatians**; exactly in the spirit of the second particular, concerning *pride*, or the arrogancy of taking pains and labor like bond-men to obtain heaven in a way of desert, instead of humbly receiving it as sinners by promise and by free gift, through Jesus Christ, and thereupon, in the freedom of his finished Redemption, serving God, not like *bond-men*, with fear and mercenariness, but like *sons*, *liberally and cordially*. To which agrees 1 Peter i. 3. *Begotten again* (the same as *born again*) *unto a lively hope*, by (not our own deeds and deserts, but) THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST. And *he that BELIEVETH is BORN OF GOD* (or buildeth on Christ alone for salvation, as that word is elsewhere frequently explained†).

Respecting *self-dependency*, the contrary thereto is, exactly as was stated in the third particular, the perpetual stile of all the acknowledged regenerate persons in Holy Scripture. *Without me ye can do nothing*, says our Lord. And, *we are GOD'S WORKMANSHIP*‡, (not our own) *created in Christ Jesus unto good works*. *Behold all things are become NEW* (when *born again*), and ALL THINGS ARE OF GOD§. *Not by might, not by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord. Who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but OF GOD*||.

* § 2 Cor. v. 17.

† If. xxviii. 16. 1 Pet. ii. 6.

|| John i. 13.

‡ Eph. ii. x.

And lastly, with regard to the fourth particular, *sin*; nothing can be plainer than that, *whoever is BORN OF GOD doth not COMMIT SIN*†, not as he once did, nor like others; it is not his occupation and life, as before. 'Tis now his *hell*, as it were, to be betrayed into it. 'Tis what he *allows not*, as St. Paul's experience comments thereon‡. The study of *righteousness*, not of *sin*, is upon his character. As it is said in the prophecy of *Ezekiel*, *I will sprinkle clean WATER upon you—a NEW HEART also will I give you, and a NEW SPIRIT will I put within you—and I will put my spirit upon you, and cause you to WALK IN MY STATUTES, and ye shall keep my judgements, and do them. The peculiar people are ZEALOUS OF GOOD WORKS.*

Nothing can be plainer than the correspondence of these properties of Regeneration as described in either Testament, to the above exhibition of it in the persons of multitudes who profess to have experienced it, and, whose motives and manners being above their own performance, and contrary to the corruptly natural principles of human nature, must be allowed to be, what they humbly profess, *born of the Spirit*.

By this process of reasoning we are at length arrived at a clear and certain sense of what it is *to be born of the Spirit*: (the contrast to which must be a *being born of the flesh*) namely, *To receive new and better principles of mind, heart, and life, than such as are corruptly natural to man, and*

† 1 John iii. 9.

‡ Rom. vii.

even CONTRARY to them, and to receive these superior moral principles in such a perpetuity, and to such an extent, as may properly be said to amount to a NEW NATURE: this is being born again and of the Spirit. As we have just now read, *a new heart will I give you, and I will put my Spirit upon you.* Nor is this the same thing with what is called *Reformation*, which is usually affirmed of a careless, wicked man, who becomes sober and devout. For there may be such a reformation, *without* a man's being born again. As we saw in the four essential points of difference between the regenerate and unregenerate, that there is a goodness in the world which admits of great sobriety and piety, which yet, being built on the corrupt principles of our own natures, was shewn to be unsound and fallacious, such as can never pass with God, nor consist with a man's capability of enjoying him, but the contrary.

Which view of the subject perfectly coincides with the character of Nicodemus, and with the conversation of our Lord with him. For Nicodemus was a *good man, a very good man*, according to the general idea of goodness, and yet our Lord assured him *he must be born again, or be lost: that without a Regeneration by the HOLY SPIRIT, he could not see the kingdom of God.* And clear enough it is from what has been said above, that so it must indeed be; for, that goodness, which rises not above, but is created in man's own principles and efforts,

efforts, hath been shewn to contain in it a *contrariety to those dispositions which are the foundation of heaven's holy, humble, bliss*. Our Lord's declaration, therefore, to Nicodemus, according to this explication taken from *life of the New Birth*, is grounded in reason and the nature of things.

This view of Regeneration also coincides with the use of the words *flesh and spirit*, wherever in other parts of the Scripture, they are set in opposition to each other, and plainly intended to characterize the *heart, or life of man*. For *flesh* in all those places uniformly means a *corrupt human nature*, and *Spirit*, the *agency of the Holy Spirit*, or a new and holy principle inserted into us by him. So we read, *If ye live after the flesh, after the dictates of corrupt human nature, ye shall die, but if after the Spirit, ye shall live. Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation; for the Spirit, the regenerate principle in-wrought by the Spirit, is willing, that always wants to be holy, but the flesh, corrupt human nature, is weak, not to be trusted without divine help.*

The sum of all, then, is, there are thousands of men in this age, and they are to be read of in all ages, who discover a change of understanding, heart and behavior, so great, as may be fitly called a *New Birth*, and so pure and contrary to man's own corrupt nature, as may be fitly called a *being born again of the Spirit*. And so born such persons must be, because the properties of *Regeneration by the Spirit*, described elsewhere,

elsewhere in the Scripture, precisely agree to the character of such persons. This explication of Regeneration by the Spirit thus taken from life and Holy Scripture, is confirmed by the correspondent sense of the words *flesh and Spirit*, by contrasting which our Lord enforces the necessity of Regeneration on Nicodemus. And this explication is again confirmed, by the applicableness of it to the *circumstances of the story of the text*, namely, to both the character of Nicodemus, and the manifest necessity there is for all men to be thus regenerated, in order to their *seeing the kingdom of God*.

Therefore, that *great moral*, or rather *spiritual, change of character*, distinguished self-evidently from what is natural to man, and actually existing in numberless living subjects of it, is *demonstrably the NEW BIRTH*, concerning which our Lord says, *Verily, verily I say unto thee, except a man be born again, of water and of the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God*.

For, *that which is born of the flesh*, of corrupt human nature, *is flesh*, or fleshly, of the same nature with its cause, *corrupt*; and *that which is born*, or produced by *the Spirit*, *is Spirit*, or spiritual, of the same nature with its cause, *pure and really good*. We are not therefore to *marvel* that Christ hath said to us, *ye must be born again*.

END OF THE TWELFTH SERMON.

OF THE EFFECTS OF REGENERATION.

S E R M O N XIII.

JOHN iii. 3.

Verily, verily I say unto thee, except a Man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.

THE Nature of Regeneration, as it was established in the preceding discourse, leaves no room for a possibility that it should mean either *a conversion from Judaism or Paganism to Christianity, or baptism by water**. Besides, the mere translation of a man from one set of notions or form of worship to another,

* The idea which some have of Regeneration, that it is a change which we undergo at death, scarcely deserves a refutation. Our Lord says it is a being born not of the *grave*, but of *water and of the Spirit*. Besides, there was no occasion to urge such a change on Nicodemus at all, if it be to be done at or after death. Neither does it correspond to the rest of the conversation. There was nothing *marvellous* or incomprehensible in it, that a man must die, and be then delivered from all temptation to and occasion for sin. But that Regeneration is something to be experienced in this life is evident, from its connection with *believing* and *obeying*. Read the whole story, from the 1st down to the 23d verse.

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seems below the gravity, concern and vehemence, with which our Lord enforces Regeneration. Of this nothing is worthy but what is *moral*, without which, though a man be christianized and baptized with water ever so much, yet *cannot* he see the kingdom of God. But, if regenerate according to the sense of it in the text, he *will certainly* see the kingdom of God. Therefore this outward conversion, or baptism, cannot be the Regeneration of the text, being unequal to the benefits of it.

It is certainly *safest*, however, to consider it as a great moral and supernatural change, and as such to continue to beseech the gift of it to us from the divine author of all virtue, the Holy Spirit. As there is a great moral and supernatural change, which is self-evidently, from its nature above-described, necessary to our enjoying heaven's holy, humble happiness, and as there is a vast number of men who actually do experience such a change, it must clearly be wisest to go beyond any other supposed Regeneration by baptism, and to seek to partake of *this*.

Let it be carefully observed, that the description before given of the Regenerate is not merely of what men *ought* to be, but of what some men, and those not a few, really *are*. Neither are the four points by which they have hitherto been distinguished, the only features of peculiarity to be seen in their character. I have here set down various and striking circumstances,

cumstances, in which they are visibly separated from others who are in an unregenerate state.

Two things, however, I shall premise. And they are, first, that a new evidence for the divine authority of the Scriptures arises from the existence of Regeneration as here laid down. For it is not only true that the morality of the Scriptures is purer and sublimer than that of any other religion under heaven, but that the true Christian alone, the *Regenerate*, is a far better man than a professor of any other religion can be.

Many heathens indeed equal, and some far excel, many common Christians, but none can approach to such as are regenerate. For in these, it hath been shewn, the motives and principles of religion and virtue are *superior to what is natural to man* whether Pagan or baptized, and superior to such a degree as amounts, like the pure lustre of diamonds compared with that of jet, to a direct contrariety. Consequently, as such a change taught in the Scriptures carries men farther in goodness than any other religion, those Scriptures have the fairest claim of all others to a divine authority.

But what is more, as this great moral transformation is plainly above human performance, and is a perpetual and public *completion of the promises* made in the Scriptures, therefore every one who is *born again of the Spirit*, is a proof of the truth of the Scriptures—for his heart and life is an exhibition of a present visible fulfilment of, as it were, *prophecies* contained in the Scriptures,

tures, the promises contained in them being of the same nature with prophecies, only these merely foretell events, but those foretell events considered as *blessings and favors* to us. Thus in Regeneration the immediate and especial agency of God is seen to fulfil, and, as it were, *to personify* the Scriptures: an incontestible proof of their divinity. As it is said, *He that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God, hath the witness in HIMSELF.*

The second thing I would premise, is, that as among all sects and parties in Christendom there appear to be some regenerate, so do they all agree most perfectly in the nature of their Regeneration. This spiritual experience, whether it be in Papist or in Protestant, in Calvinian or in Arminian, in Churchman or in Dissenter, is uniformly the same: as appears not only in their respective manners, but in their very expressions, when neither of them are thinking of their particular party, but only describing such ideas of their judgements which arise out of the simple dictates of their hearts. Thus is there *one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism,* and no more, amongst really good men, how many soever the classes may be, into which, by various accidents of birth and education, or weakness of natural understanding, they are sorted. And if in words they appear to differ, yet in substance do they always betray an absolute and entire consent. To the four distinguishing points of opposition to the goodness which is born of the flesh, they will, though contradictorily

contradictorily to the settled articles of their church, subscribe†. And here I am happy to add, that no better criterion of this uniformity of true religion can be imagined, than that which is laid down in the doctrinal articles of the Church of England. And by the way, if there are certain articles in which all good men throughout the world cordially unite, why not make them a test of truth, and assign to them exclusively the name of ORTHODOXY? Persecution of those who differ herefrom may sometimes occur, but this is an *abuse*, from which against the *use* of any thing, surely no good argument can be drawn: otherwise *wine* is *unlawful*, because some pervert it to *intemperance*, and *bread* *not to be touched*, because there may be *gluttons*.

But I hasten to add, that all who are regenerate are observed every where to agree in all the many following particulars.

Their ideas of HAPPINESS itself are altered, from what they formerly had, and from what the rest of the world still have. Give them but enough of this earth, of pleasure, of credit or fame, of money; give them but other earthly things which might be mentioned,

† This, while it fitly enlarges our charity to good men of every persuasion, yet by no means makes it indifferent of what persuasion men are. For it proves, that where the sentiments of any church or sect are opposite to those of the regenerate nature, there is a direct *tendency* to keep men unregenerate and to ruin their souls. And that it is only God's mercy and a miracle that *all* of that persuasion are not lost, not only by the corruption of nature common to all, but for want of the light of Truth to point out such corruption to them, and the remedy of it.

and

and they could once have been happy. Now their desires take a new course, *upward*. Now do they center supremely in God ; in a sense of his favor, and in aspirations to be all he would have them to be—a track in which they never flew before. *What does God think of me in all things*, is a question that lies now very near each of their hearts. To be deserted by him in duties, and abandoned by him to declensions in grace, is now, though it was not before, a real misery, and the contrary a real and the greatest happiness. The public places, and other means, of dissipation, so essential to the comfort of others and once of themselves, are now shunned as the wretched resources of those who have no God to go to, and as contrary to that pure happiness which is to be found in the enjoyment of God and Jesus Christ. The *Holy Ghost* is a *comforter*, and *there is all joy and peace in believing*. Like these pleasures there are no other, and the frequent taste of them which the regenerate have, and their suitableness hereto, are earnest of what they are to receive above, and preparations for them. They pity, instead of envying others their worldly delights ; and though perhaps at intervals they may detect themselves, through some remainders of their old unregenerate nature, in recurring to their old sources of happiness, such as dress, news, furniture, money, and the like, yet do they always on the detection look on themselves with remorse and shame.

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Their REPENTANCE, their FAITH, and their GOOD WORKS, are all now essentially altered.

Their *Repentance* is, because it is now *daily* and *perpetual*, like a river still flowing always in its proper channel, and not *occasional*, as it was before, like a land-flood which, though widely spreading for a season, is soon wholly drawn off and gone. The daily and perpetual sense of unworthiness and deficiency, and sin, is a source never-failing of humble distress, and self-loathing. So that though God forgives them they can never forgive themselves, but always love to lie low at the feet of God for their continual changes and miscarriages. And they simply consider their baseness and their ill-desert in this their repentance, without any advertence to hell or punishment, as what is to be avoided by means of their repentance. It is of a purer sort than this, and one being pure and the other selfish, therefore it is contrary to this. Hence they are always inclined to think every one, who is possessed of any real grace, better than themselves. And this repentance is so extensive that it mixes with their very comforts, and *heightens*, in proportion as it *abases*, them.

Their *Faith* is now, not as before, nor as that of others is, a general belief of such a being having existed, suffered and risen again, as Jesus Christ, but a particular belief on the Savior for themselves, and with the heart, as persons interested herein most essentially. It is now not a mere crediting the story, but an actual appropriation of the benefits, of a Redeemer.

Redeemer. It is a believing, so as to venture on him, for eternity. It is a supernatural act of presuming to stand before God without any merits or recommendation of *their own*, merely on the virtues and excellencies performed by *another*, by Jesus Christ. It is a real and practical treating Jesus Christ as a Savior, and risking the immortal soul on his atonement and righteousness.

Their *Good Works* are fundamentally *new*. New in quality, more fervent, full of affection than before : which was beautifully typified in the manner of the prophets healing the waters of Jericho. *Bring me a new cruse* (that is a new heart) he cried, and put *salt* therein, that is, spirit, life, potency, fire, as opposed to insipid formality and dull Pharisaism. Their *prayers* are now not solemn things to be said to God with great demureness and gravity, but expressions and eruptions of desires that subsist in the heart for spiritual mercies and gifts ; and accordingly they want *answers* to prayers, and do not merely *utter* them. The *medium* of their prayers is now different. 'Till now they could pray to God as a good being in himself, whom they hoped as such would accept them : but now, in Christ's name alone, pleading his atonement and righteousness alone for favor and regard, do they dare to pray. And now they have a disposition to pray *continually*, in the midst of their occupations in life : nor yet as the Papists do, who impose something like this on themselves as a task—but from a continual sense of the living

living expediency and occasion there is, to be hanging always on the divine preservation and moral inspiration.

Their *praises, their reading or hearing God's word, their sacraments*, are new. Sincere are their praises, from a settled sense of the greatness of all God's mercies in comparison with their demerits. They praise Jesus Christ too, and the Holy Spirit, and the Father, for new blessings. *They sing a new song, which no man can learn, save the hundred and forty and four thousand which are redeemed from the earth.* They bear, or read, *the Scriptures* in such a manner now as they do nothing else, as the ground of their dependency through a never-ending futurity. They frequently rejoice herein, at the glorious truths discovered in divers parts of the word of God, as they *rejoice who divide the spoil* in battle. They use the divine oracles *for doctrine*, that is, for fresh discoveries of the method of salvation; *for reproof*, as being in a way of reproof, the great means of counter-acting the corrupt principles of their remaining unregeneracy; *and for instruction in personal righteousness*. And now very great benefit do they actually derive herefrom, whereas hitherto they neither found nor sought any. 'Tis both new to them, and something unknown to the rest of the world, *as new born babes to desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby.*

They now go to the Holy Table as to a fresh act of investiture with the blessings of the covenant of grace, of which the Sacrament of
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the Lord's Supper is a seal to all those who *take hold* of it. And all their other good works of *justice, inoffensiveness, charity* towards men, and *temperance in themselves*, and the graces of *patience, meekness*, and the like, are of a totally new cast. For now they practise each without an idea of valuing themselves thereupon. To be merely just, inoffensive, charitable, temperate, are but little attainments; and their patience is now *cheerful*, knowing that God is Love to them in all his dispensations; and their meekness is not affected, or constitutional, as before, but flowing from *a Love which is not easily provoked*, and from *an humility that esteems every thing too good for itself*. And far beyond these tempers do they press, after the *perfect image of God*, and to *swim*, as it were, and to lose themselves for ever, in the ocean of his Love and Grace, and eternal All-sufficiency.

But the many thousand regenerate persons are observed to differ from all others, and from their former selves, not only thus in their very idea of *happiness*, and in their *repentance, faith*, and *good works*, but also in their sins. For they have many sins now, of which they had no conception before, arising from their new spiritual state: such as *unbelief, spiritual pride, the fear of man*, and similar evils, which they have not been wont to regard as sins, or to be in any danger of committing, till now. Besides, the reluctance they feel *before* sin, the incompleteness of their pleasure *under* sin, and their pungent sorrow after sin, distinguish their

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very *crimes* from those of the rest of the world. They are good men in the midst of their guilts themselves—for they can never sin with their whole hearts, nor enjoy such mere delight in sin as the world does, from the interruption and repugnance they meet with from their regenerate principle of true and real sanctification. Neither are their sins *in general* of a *gross* kind, but very *seldom indeed*, and in *most* of them *never once* such, but only what are called *human infirmities*; for which, however, they feel a terror or uneasiness equal to, if not greater than, what was excited by gross and actual sins formerly. And formerly their sins drove them *from* God, instead of *to* him, now they instantly send the soul to the merit of Christ for absolution, and to the Spirit of Christ for restitution, or for new and greater grace than before. And thus as they were formerly *hardened*, they are now *softened*, by their sins: and so virtuously, that this affords them no scope or permission to sin, but melts them into a purer hatred of both sin and themselves. Aforetime they could heal the wound of sin by the balsam of their own comparative merit, now none but that of the Redeemer's blood is sufficient for this purpose. In all these, and various other particulars, are the sins of the regenerate intrinsically different from what they themselves once committed, and from what the rest of the world commit.

Different from, better than, and contrary to what they once were, are the regenerate observed

served to be, in not only the respects above-mentioned, but also in their *apprehensions of the following things.*

That God punishes here, that he may not punish hereafter. Such once were their ideas; but now they cannot entertain a thought that any *temporal* sufferings can be the least commutation or substitution for much greater *eterna* ones. The new notions they have of the evil of all sin, and of the justice and propriety of hell-torments, forbid all such ideas. Indeed, where a man by faith takes an interest in the commutation or substitution of Jesus Christ for sinners, there he has reason to think, that all the sufferings he shall ever feel will be confined to this earth, and that even these sufferings are only permitted, that he may be *made thereby a partaker of the divine holiness*: like parental chastisements inflicted for the amendment and perfection of children*. But these views leave no room for conceiving, that their punishment *here* is intended to supercede that which their sins deserved to *eternity*, those sufferings being all supposed to have been transacted and executed on Christ, as the sinner's proxy, and no sufferings therefore now left for *them*, except in a way of *mercy*, for the reclaiming them to duty, and detaching them from the world, and other important beneficial purposes.

Their former apprehensions agree not with their present, also, concerning *the acceptance of sincere imperfect obedience instead of perfect.* For

* Heb. xii. 5th and 6th following verses.

they see a perfection provided for sinners in the vicarious obedience of Jesus Christ, *in whom*, though imperfect, *they are complete**: their sinful imperfection being not *accepted* but *punished*, with their other sins, in the person of their surety: and what is good in them, though deficient, well-received, not merely for its sincerity, but only through the medium of Christ's righteousness. A doctrine finely painted out to us by the sanctification of gifts by the altar on which they were laid†, and by the odors (of the Redeemer's merits) perfuming the golden vials which contained the prayers of the saints‡.

Hitherto, though performing but little in comparison of what they might and ought to perform, and that upon wrong principles, still were they able to think much of that little; while now, though performing much more and much better, do they think but little and meanly of their performances; and herein their judgment is according to truth, *before* it was according to imagination and pride.

Hitherto, though committing many sins and allowed ones, yet did they never incline to fear and despondency; now, though they tolerate no sin, but are in arms against all appearance of evil, are they prone to suspect and distrust their safety and share in the divine favor: thus hoping once where they ought to have trembled, and trembling now where they ought to hope. Though bad before, yet thought they themselves tolerably good, but being good now, as

* Col. ii. 10.

† Mat. xxiii. 19.

‡ Rev. v. 8.

far as humanity admits of, yet think they of themselves only as miserable sinners, and scarcely capable of possessing divine grace. Being proud before, they conceited themselves humble, but being comparatively humble now view themselves as proud.

The apprehensions of these regenerate persons naturally are altered, because their hearts and characters are so. And hence it is, that both of *this world and of the other* they entertain sentiments the reverse of what till now they had admitted. *Of this world* they thought *not very ill*; they could elevate its lesser vices into virtues, and explain away its sins: hoping well of the future prospects of most around them, and imagining that scarce any were bad enough to be sent to hell at death. Now, their understandings being enlightened by the Spirit of God, and therefore their views conformable to those of the Holy Scripture, they believe that the *whole world lieth in wickedness**: that *they are all gone out of the way*: that *they are altogether become abominable, that there is none that doth good, no not one†*: that *broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat, but strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth to life, and few there be that find it‡*: that *whoso will be the friend of the world is the enemy of God§*: and that **THE DEVIL** is expressly called *the Prince of this world, and the God of this world||*. These opinions of men and things are dictated by the Holy Spirit in

* 1 John v. 19.
13, 14.

† Rom. iii. Pſ. xiv.

‡ Matt. vii.

§ Jam. iv. 4.

|| John xiii. 31.

2 Cor. iv. 4.

his book of truth, and the regenerate do not blindly embrace them, but clearly perceive that, by making the law of God a criterion of judgement, they are according to truth.

OF HEAVEN also their conceptions are essentially altered. From thinking it a place of some sensual pleasure, (though not like the Mahometans, of a *gross* nature) a place of perfect health and happiness in some way or another, they now see it to be a state of mere *holiness*, and the happiness of it consisting in its holiness. In this light they long for its commencement, as being the time when they shall love God perfectly, and be removed from all sin, and imperfection, and inconstancy.

To be absorbed in humility and adoration without any interruption, and with all increase and growth therein; to be settled for ever in a world, all whose inhabitants are purely and perfectly spiritual; to be always near to the fountain of all grace and good, and freely to converse with him, and liberally to partake of his inexhaustible fullness; and to be assimilating to, and uniting with, him more and more and to all eternity, this *intellectual, moral, and spiritual* heaven, is that which exists in the ideas and hopes of the regenerate. This will be the felicity which alone is suited to their regenerate principle of *centring in God*. And it is a felicity not more suited to them now, than it was formerly alien, foreign, and heterogeneous to them.

But not only are the apprehensions of those who are born of the Spirit observed to differ
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thus from all men, but their very *conscience* is different. It is *finer* than before, to the great offence of the world who maliciously censure it as superstitious, over-nice and hypocritical, but in fact it is perfectly rational, because its rule of judging is the strict and perfect law of God. Hence it is that it sees many things to be sins, which it never thought were such till now. And the dominion of conscience is now both *stronger* and *more extensive* than it ever was. So that it now takes under its cognizance all things little and great, public and private, civil and sacred, the whole man. Its checks are severer and more effectual, its notices of approaching sin much earlier, its terror more intolerable, its supports more sure and satisfactory, than hath been ever experienced in a fleshly estate.

The PASSIONS seem now to have been turned into other and opposite courses. They *love* what they once hated, and *bate* what they once loved, respecting the despised people and cause of God. They *grieve* and *mourn for*, what once gave them no concern, but delight, their sins. They *fear* to offend God as children do to displease a most amiable and endearing parent—not as formerly, if at all, lest he should send them to perdition. Their *hope* is now not a wild, undigested, and irrational expectation of the divine acceptance, but an expectation hereof subject to, and rising out of, the plain and express promises of God in Jesus Christ. Their *joy* would be complete, if they could always walk in the light of God's countenance: a thing

never imagined before this change took place. Their *envy* is converted too from this and the other temporal object, to spiritual ones : with what eyes of desire do they look on *their* grace, who appear very much or at all to exceed them.

The time would fail me to enumerate all the circumstances of striking distinction in the character of those who are born of the Spirit. I will, therefore, without adding more, hasten to a conclusion.

These great moral lineaments of Regeneration are not drawn from fine-spun speculation and religious reveries, but from *life*. Any person of candor and observation will perceive, that there now are, and always were, upon earth, many thousands of persons who are thus plainly born again, and as plainly born of the Spirit. And that all men are not so born is no more an argument that none are so, than the want of universality in revelation is an argument against the reality and truth of it. The Gospel is given partially to but a few compared with the bulk of mankind : the partial Regeneration of the Gospel, therefore, is a thing of the same sort as being dispensed but to a few, not to *all* : for if Regeneration is given to all, then all are regenerated, which is contrary to fact. The reasons for either dispensation, however inscrutable to us, do not invalidate either the being of the Gospel, or Regeneration, for each alike contain intrinsic marks of their own divinity for the vindication of their existence. Each alike are above human performance,

formance, and must therefore be ascribed to a superior author, and, from the high moral purity of their frame and nature, must be ascribed to none but a divine author; each alike can *only be born of the Spirit*.

If it should be asked, why are not the regenerate admired and revered in the world, if any such there are? For this natural reason; because in Regeneration men being endued with principles contrary to those of their fellow-men and of the world, naturally excite aversion and persecution. *Every one that doth evil, hateth the light, and comes not to it, lest his deeds should be reprov'd, and all his present pursuits and future hopes be broken up, and he by this means be tormented before the time.* Hence we are taught always to expect, as a thing of course and perfectly natural, that *he that is born after the flesh persecutes him that is born after the Spirit**.

The opposition which the carnal mind shews to those who are born of the Spirit, is as universal as the union of these among themselves is; so that we find men of the finest tempers become angry, the most polite and elegant become rude and boorish, the most candid lose their charity, and the greatest advocates for liberty in religion regret their favourite maxims of toleration, when the object they meet with is one *who is born of the Spirit*. Parents themselves here forget their own flesh†; and children, and all the nearest relations of blood itself, take up arms, as it were, against

* Gal. iv.

† Which our Lord declares would be the effect of his doctrine, Matt. x. 21.

each

each other, upon the detection of that monster amongst them, a really *Regenerate Man*. No elevation of rank or fortune, not majesty itself can procure an exemption. Agreeably to the cause assigned for it by our Lord himself, *If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.*

Two particulars more are all that I shall suggest on this important subject.

The first of them addresses those in whom this great supernatural and spiritual change subsists. This change is such an one as man could not effect: and neither could Satan (unless he is divided against himself) effect it: but it plainly is the work of the Creator of the ends of the earth. Now what end could the Almighty have in view in thus regenerating you. There is nothing to which it is adapted but to heaven. For it unsuits you for earth, where sin and temptation, and changes and imperfection always will be. And being of such a celestial tendency as to aim at the subversion of all sin, and the enjoyment of all grace, it disqualifies you for hell, that world of sin and every thing opposite to grace. There remains only heaven, for which it can prepare you: to all whose employments it is immediately and directly suited. Consequently in this experience, notwithstanding the remains of indwelling sin, and numberless wants, you are infallibly declared to be *the people whom God hath formed*

formed for himself, to be with him and to enjoy his glories to all eternity.

And secondly and lastly, seeing there is so high and deep a change actually and undeniably experienced by thousands in all ages, and that it is in its own nature indispensably necessary to our partaking of heaven and avoiding hell, it will clearly be imprudent and hazardous, as well as impious, not to betake ourselves in constant supplication for, and search after, this change, to him who expressly declares that *he giveth the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.*

END OF THE THIRTEENTH SERMON.

Of Solomon's Judgment between the two Harlots.**S E R M O N XIV.****I KINGS iii. 26.**

Then spake the Woman whose the living Child was unto the King, (for her Bowels yearned upon her Son) and she said, O! my Lord, give her the living Child, and in no Wise slay it. But the other said, Let it be neither mine nor thine, but divide it. Then the King answered and said, Give her the living Child, and in no Wise slay it: she is the Mother thereof.

ON the mere difference of affection to the child in dispute did the determination of which of these two claimants was its real mother turn. And the judgment of King Solomon herein was universally approved and admired, the woman whose claim was rejected being herself silenced by it. Both parties seem to have had no idea of the manner in which the cause would go: neither perhaps were any of
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the inferior courts of judicature able to decide upon it, on which account probably it was brought to the King as to the last resort. Each woman insisted upon a right to the living child, their actions and gestures and speeches we may suppose to have been much alike, those of the real mother dictated by nature, those of the pretended one counterfeited by art, but the difference undistinguishable to mortal eye. Nay, the real mother perhaps being overcome with feelings too strong for utterance, might fall short of the professions and agitations, which the other must use to support even *the appearance* of a good cause.

Now each of these circumstances are so picturesque of important spiritual facts and truths, that I cannot but look upon the whole story as typical, in the following manner. Solomon, in his quality of Judge, resembles Jesus Christ in his office of the last Judge of quick and dead. The *two women*, pretending each to be the mother of the living child, point out two different sorts of professors, each laying claim to *true religion*, which is in many places of Scripture compared to a *living child*: as where our Lord says, *except a man be converted, and become as a LITTLE CHILD, he can in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again, of such is the kingdom of heaven. Simplicity, helplessness, teachableness, humility*, being the attributes of little children, and equally of the true Christian, who as *a new-born babe desires the sincere milk of the word, that he may grow thereby;*

thereby; is *simple*, not artful; ever feeling his *own helplessness*, and want of divine *teaching*; perceives that he has *every thing to learn* in his new state of spiritual existence, and is *lowly in his own eyes*. The false professor and unsound Christian very closely imitate the truly pious and godly in their external behavior, such as the performance of religious duties, and a moral blamelessness of life, and in the language they use, just as the pretended followed the real mother of the child in her expressions, air, and actions, and perhaps far exceeded her, as the hypocrite often does the true saint, the one not allowing himself to seek, but *shunning*, the praise and notice of men, while the other labors to be thought well of, and to be admired by them. These two characters are often undistinguished amongst men, the saint too frequently passing for an hypocrite, and the hypocrite for a saint; and the truth of their respective pretensions to real religion is sometimes not discerned, till they come before the great Judge in another world; concerning which audit, as the true mother trembled and feared for the loss of her child, but the false one not, so the genuine Christian is full of doubts and terrors lest his profession should not be allowed of by the Judge of hearts and spirits, while the self-deceiver is bold and presuming. Nothing counterfeit, however, escapes the detection of Jesus Christ, whose penetration, like that of Solomon in this trial, can reach where that of others cannot. And the judgement of Jesus Christ, like this of Solomon,

will

will be satisfactory to the whole *court*, as it were, of an assembled universe; the condemned party* having nothing to object thereto; like the man, who, on the discovery of *his not having on a wedding-garment*, was *speechless*. And there is great reason to think, that the decision concerning true and false piety will turn, as the fate of these two women did, *not on actions*, which are equivocal, and may be nearly the same in either case, *but on affections*, or the state of the heart: a circumstance not suspected before by the loser, but which will be found truly differencing between the two contending characters, in the opinion of God, angels, and themselves.

From the scope then of this story, which is certainly thus typical *by accident*, if not *from design*, we may take occasion to meditate on the great duty of strict and severe self-examination, as it is suggested by the lengths of profession which it is possible and easy for us to go, without being really what we seem to others, and not less, through extreme self-deceit, to ourselves, to be, the possessors of real grace, true and proper owners of the living child.

The *young man* in the Gospel is an alarming instance in point. Inoffensive, sober, and sincerely devout from his very childhood, and to such a degree, that our Lord himself could charge him with no outward breach of any one commandment; but, unable to satisfy himself

* 1 Sam. ii. 9. Rom. iii. 13.

herewith,

herewith, he applies to Jesus Christ for further instruction. All he *could do* he thought he *had* done, and wanted to know whether upon the principles of Christ's doctrine he was not perfectly safe. At length, however, by imposing on him a command to go and sell all that he had and give to the poor, and afterwards to come and follow Christ, it is discovered, that he prefers money to his Maker, and *earth*, notwithstanding the great appearance in his devotions to the contrary, to *heaven*. And therefore we find him *going away sorrowful*, for he had many possessions. Going away from Christ, and therefore going infallibly to *perdition*. Money with hell was dearer to him than poverty with Christ. Who could suppose such dreadful principles of heart lurking under such amiable and excellent manners of life? Christ called them forth into light by his piercing command, and so discovered what he really was, just as Solomon drew out the affections of the two women, by commanding the living child to be divided in twain, and so proved the honesty of the one and baseness of the other. We may go then as far as the young man in the Gospel did, and be lost after all, because we may be unsound and undevoted after all.

It may be thought, however, by the false professor, that he exceeds this apparently religious youth in a most essential article, namely, in convictions of sin, in terror and remorse, which are the threshold of true religion. But alas ! greater horror than was that of Cain, is perhaps

perhaps scarcely possible to man: and yet we all know that Cain was a reprobate, and is now most probably in the bottomless pit. For in this manner alone is his name constantly used in Scripture, with the note of *wicked* put upon it. And it is very remarkable, that Cain looks to have been a very pious man: for he brought offerings to the Lord of the fruit of the ground, till he knew that God accepted Abel but not him; and then his countenance falls; he is wroth secretly with God; and, because his arm could not reach God, he aims a blow at his favourite; a mortal blow; and *Abel, righteous Abel*, lies a bloody, breathless spectacle of death. Such foul mud was there of hatred of God at the bottom of his piety; clear and fair as its streams appeared, till disturbed and agitated by a fit occasion; and such capability of murder itself lay concealed under this sweet and brotherly act, of presenting to God an offering jointly, at the same time and place, with Abel. Surely it was a *wise man indeed* who said, *He that trusteth his own heart is a fool*. Felix could tremble, and yet be adulterous, and unjust, and unconverted Felix still. Pharaoh, a vessel of wrath, could be greatly wrought on by, and affrighted at, God's judgements, and be humbled by them so greatly as to submit, an haughty tyrant as he was, to a captive Jew, and beg and beseech his intercessory prayers for him. And Saul could be so struck and overwhelmed at the vision which denounced his death, as *to fall straight-way all along on the earth, and be sore afraid,*

and have no strength in him. And yet the condition of each of these persons is, if we may judge from their characters, eternally wretched. Judas himself repented himself, and brought forth some fruit meet for repentance: for he brought again the thirty pieces of silver, confessing that *he had sinned, in that he had betrayed the innocent blood*; and afterwards *departed, and went, and*, from excess of horror at his crime, and perhaps by way of atonement for it, *hanged himself*; but how unacceptably appears, both from the circumstance of *his bowels gushing out*, and from the declaration of our Lord, that it had been happy *for that man if he had never been born*. Great and violent then may be our convictions of sin, and yet our grace not greater than that of these deplorable instances of reprobacy.

Not less possible is it that our FAITH, as well as our Repentance, may be counterfeit. For certainly that of *Devils* is so, who *believe and tremble*. And *Simon also himself*, it is said, BELIEVED*, who was yet in *the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity*. Nay, so great *Faith* there may be *as shall remove mountains*, and that furnished with *all knowledge, so as to understand all the mysteries* of the Gospel, and yet no true grace be in the heart†. Should heaven entrust us with a power to command universal nature, to say to this sycamine tree, be thou removed and cast into the sea, and to be instantly obeyed therein, we should scarcely doubt

* Acts viii. 23.

† 1 Cor. xiii.

whether

whether we were favourites of heaven, true believers, and the elect. And yet such mighty works we might perform, and many have performed them, concerning whom our Lord says, that at the last day he must profess, he has not, and never had, any acquaintance with them; but will bid them *depart*, be gone into perdition, *I never knew you*†.

Amendment also, though, like Repentance and Faith, it is always exercised by really spiritual persons, may be no proof of a certainly true profession of religion. For there have been great reformations of life without any the least conversion of heart; nay, while the heart remained capable of the most dreadful enormities possible. For do we not one while find *Herod bearing John gladly*, and *reforming many things*, and presently afterwards sending for this same *John's head in a charger*? He is at once able to approve and love John's ministry, and to make his body a ghastly, panting, headless trunk, merely to gratify an insignificant girl at a birth-night-ball.

Much *restraining grace* may be vouchsafed to any one, as it was to *Abimelech*, whom God *with-held* from sinning against *Sarah's* person; and to *Saul*, who had many lucid moral intervals in his character; and to numberless other persons, who yet nevertheless were not possessed of true Religion. Hence we read of *the house being swept and garnished, and yet inhabited by seven devils*: and of those, who, *having escaped the pollutions that are in the world*,

† Matth. vii.

through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, are again entangled therein, and overcome, and their latter end is worse than their beginning.

What hath been said of *Repentance, Faith, Amendment, and Restraining Grace*, may be also applied to *Zeal*, which is almost of all other things, most characteristic of a Christian: and yet we know that *Jehu* had zeal to a most astonishing degree, so as to be carried through such a command as the massacre of *Abab's* seventy sons, and of all the priests and worshippers of *Baal*; and yet did *he take no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel WITH ALL HIS HEART: for he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin.*

In these and numberless other instances, as the pretended resembled the real mother of the living child, does the pretended resemble the real Christian: but pass as *that* may for *this* amongst men, the divine *Solomon*, the exact observer of the *reins and inward parts*, as it were, of the soul, will at last detect and destroy them. Awful consideration! which as *living instances* may illustrate better than general propositions, therefore we will cite a few more.

'Tis affecting to see such a man as *Abitbophel* miscarry to all eternity. So far did he go as to be a *spiritual*, as well as civil, counsellor to no less a saint and prophet than David himself. He was David's *guide*, and *familiar companion*. They took *sweet counsel together*, conversed no doubt of heavenly

heavenly things, and *walked in the house of God as friends*. Many an happy moment had David in his pious intercourse with Ahithophel. But the sequel was, that this same high professor is in fact equally false to David and to God; as appears by the wicked counsel given by him to *Absalom* against *David*, and by his untimely end.

Apostles themselves, when not under immediate inspirations, may be mistaken in their opinion of a professor. Hence St. Paul exclaims with grief and wonder that *Demas* had forsaken him, *having loved this present world*.

Great and intimate *prophetical communication* may a man have *with God*, so as to see a *vision of the Almighty*, having the eyes open but falling into a trance, and yet be no truly good man, but a reprobate. For such was *Balaam*, called by the *Holy Ghost* *wicked Balaam*. And yet could he proceed so far in religion, as not to go beyond the commandment of the Lord to say this or that against the Israelites, though Balak should have had *offered him an houseful of silver and gold*. Hear him admiring, in the most exalted style, the happiness and safety of God's people, and *wishing to die their death, and that his last end might be like theirs*. See him obstinately upright, notwithstanding royal solicitations, and persevering in his integrity, though Balak smote his hands together thereat, with mingled wonder and fury. And yet from the first we may observe a secret hankering after Balak's money, although in these instances it broke not

out into act. For why else did he, after being forbidden to go with the King's messengers, and after being instructed that the people were blessed, and should not be cursed by him, consult God again a second time*, and appear to want leave *only to go* with the messengers, though they had had the divine answer before? So we read, *Thy way is perverse before me—Go with the men: but only the word that I shall speak unto thee, that thou shalt speak*, said the angel of the Lord to him. At last, however, though *Balaam* did not actually curse the people, yet is he able to teach Balak how to *procure* a curse. Invite them, says he†, to the feasts made at the sacrifices to your gods, and let the daughters of *Moab* be unreserved and wanton, and your purpose is effected. They will sin, and then the curse of God is sure to follow. Thus may men be inspired supernaturally, hear the words of God himself, and stubbornly resist for a long time together many strong temptations, and wish earnestly to be in the condition of God's people, and yet be lost characters for ever, having no genuine sincerity or piety under all.

Great external respect for Christ the bridegroom may the *five foolish virgins* have, and trim their lamps, and go forth to meet him, in honor of his spiritual marriage with the church, his bride: they may tarry long for his coming, and the like, and yet be only foolish virgins still: very awfully representing to us, that it is possible, and common, to join ourselves to the

* Deut. xxiii. 5. † Rev. ii. 4. Numb. xxxi, 16: also, xxv. 1, 2, 3.

wise and good, to take a lamp of profession in our hands, to prepare for death and Christ's second coming, and to take great pains to obtain salvation, and yet be *foolish* still; that is, *wicked* and *unregenerate*: for so that word is used in *Proverbs* throughout, and manifestly in this parable.

Lord, have we not eaten and drank in thy presence, that is, at the sacrament; and *in thy name done many wonderful works*, that is, miracles; and *have we not taught others in thy name*, that is, thy doctrine, and by thy authority; will be the claim of many at the day of judgement, who yet, says our Lord himself, will be rejected for ever§.

Examples these, which very much resemble the story of the *Ephraimites* slain *at the passages, or fords, of Jordan*†. The test imposed on them was, *Say now Shibboleth, and they said Sibboleth, for they could not frame to pronounce it right*. Only one letter, or rather breathing, was wanting, but that want was sufficient to determine their country and origin; and therefore as impostors are they slain by JEPHTHAH, a type of *Jesus*, at the fords of *Jordan*, that is, at death, the passage to a future world, as *Jordan* was to *Canaan*.

To hear the word of the kingdom, and understand it, and receive it with joy, happens alike to those *who have*, and have *not, root in themselves**. And Ezechiel introduces *false* professors saying every one to

§ Matt. vii. 21, 22, 23. Luke xxiv. 26.

† Judges xii. 6.

* Matt. xiii. 20, 21.

his brother, *Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from the Lord. And they do come as the people (of God) cometh, and they sit as God's people, and they hear his words: and his servants are unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument:* but there is an essential flaw in their character. Like the pretended mother of the living child, they closely follow the real, in her gestures, expressions and actions, but at length are discovered to be deceivers both of themselves and others, by the spiritual *Solomon* on his undeceivable tribunal, and are ruined.

All that I shall add of this sort is, not the case of *Ananias* and *Sapphira* selling their house and land for Christ's sake, and being reprobate still, but that of *Judas*, who could even be one of the twelve Apostles, one always near to the person of Christ, and commissioned by our Lord himself to preach his Gospel, and enabled to perform miracles in proof of it, and yet, we know, was radically wrong, and unrenewed; and, therefore, though he might have been the means of converting others, was himself rejected and undone.

Reflections these, excited naturally by the sense of Solomon's judgement between the two Harlots, which, though under a divine influence, they may be of eternal use and benefit, may also be, when perverted, the occasion of much hurt. For instance, thus: When a man employs them for the purpose of gratifying a censorious
spirit

spirit respecting others, or an unjust melancholy respecting himself. In the former case, the man who, seeing how far we may go and not be true Christians, does therefore make his brother *an offender for a word*, and begin to suspect the truth of his profession, for any human miscarriages, where there is, notwithstanding, good reason to hope that a principle of real grace still subsists, had much better turn his suspicions upon himself, and leave others, in humble hope and charity, to their own master to stand or fall. It is well said, *he that judgeth shall be judged*; for the good man sees so much to condemn in himself, that he is disposed to think any body, who makes a tolerable profession, to be better than himself; and from the Scripture—instances of the falls of the best men, he is disposed to *hope all things*, and think for the *best*, and that to a very great degree, so as with difficulty to give up the favorable opinion heretofore entertained of a person in many instances appearing to be really godly and spiritual. Nothing is a more dreadful sign of our own unchristian state, than to be ready to *unchristian* others, on any pretence whatever, of whom there is the least and lowest ground of hope, that possibly they may yet have some true principle of grace, though in particular instances it may have been greatly thwarted and injured. *Bearing and forbearing one another, and restoring such as fall, in the spirit of meekness, considering ourselves lest we also be tempted, is the law of Christ.* Respecting ourselves we cannot
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be too severe, nor respecting others too moderate, if we do not thereby wilfully set aside reason and truth.

In the case of *melancholy*, the choicest doctrines of comfort and pardon will seem designed for others, not for us; and therefore no wonder if such persons have been, during this discourse, *writing bitter things against themselves*. But that neither this, nor any other subject, may *afflict those whom the Lord hath not afflicted*, reason must be summoned to our aid. If on a cool and solemn survey of our characters, as for eternity, we discover two things in them; First, A perpetual sense of our own vileness, disabling us to trust to any thing for acceptance but the mere grace of God in Christ; and Secondly, An habitual and practical desire to be delivered from all sin, and to possess every fruit of the Spirit, sincerely wishing to be made holy as well as happy, to be sanctified in body, soul, and spirit, as well as to be justified, there can be no ground for apprehending that *we* are hypocrites, or self-deceived professors, whoever else may be. The Scriptures every where point out such as an infallibly safe state. But, if on the other hand, on a cool and solemn survey of our characters, we appear to be in no such state, to have no such habitual and practical desires after universal holiness, attended with a constant self-loathing, and looking to Christ alone for righteousness, it becomes us to be alarmed inexpressibly and distressed. Though even then, because *now is the accepted time, now the day of Salvation*, and
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to him that asketh it shall be given, there is no room left for melancholy and despair. If wrong, and desirous at all events to be right, it is expressly said, Let him ask wisdom of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not.

All that I shall add is, If the young man in the Gospel was unwilling to give up his all to Christ, but I *am* willing to give up my all to him: if Cain expected the acceptance of his sacrifices, on their own account, without any respect to Faith in Jesus Christ, but I can hope for the acceptance of my person and services *only through* Jesus Christ: if Felix must retain his *Drusilla*, but I am desirous to surrender up every known sin: if Pharaoh must stand upon his dignity, but I supremely want the honor which cometh from God only: if Saul rejected the commandment of the Lord, but I am habitually seeking to stand perfect and complete in all the will of God: if Judas was a thief, but I am honest: if Simon Magus believed with the head, but my faith interests my heart and whole soul: if many endued with the gifts of tongues, knowledge, miracles, prophecy, were workers of wickedness, but I, in the general use of all the means of grace, am working righteousness: if Herod loved worldly pleasure and human esteem *more* than the ministry of the Gospel, but I *less*: if Abimelech, Saul, and others, had merely restraining grace, but I *more*, a principle that could be *happy in being holy*: if Jehu took no heed to walk in God's law,

law, and quarrelled not with his former sins, but my experience is the reverse of his: if Ahithophel was traitorous, but I am upright: if Demas forsook, but I abide by, the Gospel: if Balaam bartered his conscience for the rewards of unrighteousness, but I detest them, and dread the love of money: if the foolish virgins have only the *lamp* of outward profession, but I have *oil in my lamp*, or true grace in my heart; that is, a principle aspiring after God as my portion and bliss: if others be *Ephraimites*, but I a *Gileadite*, one in the interest of the spiritual *Jephthah*, the Lord Jesus Christ, and fighting under his banner against *sin, the world, the flesh, and the devil*: if some hearers, like those mentioned first by Ezechiel, and afterwards by our Savior, bring forth *no* spiritual *fruit*, but *I* do, namely rooted and practical attachment of heart to Christ and his laws: what matters it to me, how far all these professors went! They are wrong, but I must be right. The shooting star, which like these instances of false professors, may for a while to appearance greatly outshine true ones, cannot make the *real* star less *real*. In one word, though the pretended strongly resembles the real mother of the living child, and the real mother tremble for her fate lest her pretensions be disallowed at the last day, yet shall her fears be found to be false. The divine Solomon, while he points to either the total want of affection, or to the spuriousness of it, in the mere professor, shall display to the universe those

those affections of desire to be holy as well as happy, and to center in Jesus Christ alone for hope, which are the distinguishing proofs of grace having been formed in us, as the living child was in its true and proper mother. He will both discover marks of unsoundness in some, and evidences of grace in others, where we perhaps do not suspect them. *Many that are first shall be last, and the last, in their own opinion to obtain heaven, shall be first.* And, therefore, though it is the duty of faith to trust in God's word alway, without fear and wavering, and to *rejoice evermore*, yet from the proneness to distrust our own hearts, which is so peculiar to real humble faith, it is well said, *Blessed is the man that* FEARETH ALWAY.

END OF THE FOURTEENTH SERMON.

 OF IMPORTUNITY IN PRAYER.

S E R M O N XV.

GEN. xxxii. 26.

I will not let thee go, except thou blest me.

JACOB was now all embarrassment and terror on the news of Esau's coming to meet him with four hundred men. He expects the certain slaughter of part of his household, and accordingly, after dividing *the people that were with him, and the flocks, and herds, and camels, into two bands*, he adds this direction: *If Esau come to the one company and smite it, then the other company which is left shall escape.* This arrangement is followed by earnest application to God for protection; which being done, and the divine promises to him pleaded therein with equal fervor, self-abasement and simplicity, he proceeds to send his family, furnished with magnificent presents, to sooth the rage of Esau, over the brook *Jabbok*; but stays himself behind, to renew his application to God for safety and help. In this situation, solitude and the darkness of night leaving him

him at liberty to use, unheard and unseen, what voice, what gestures, what tears his most perilous condition dictated, he begins a strain of strong prayer: but no sooner does he appear to have begun, but suddenly he finds standing before him a being clothed with the shape and body of a man. Whence could he come? what bring him thither? who can he be? It was soon discovered (perhaps by the style of some reproofs given to his distrust of the divine promises, after repeated and miraculous helps afforded to his faith) that this human form was a supernatural and celestial one, assumed by no less a person than the Lord Jesus Christ*, who seems now to have treated Jacob in the same manner, as long afterwards the Syrophœnician woman, and for the same reason too, with great sharpness and many repulses. Jacob, like the Syrophœnician woman, however, will take no denial. He lays hold of the person of Christ, refusing to *let him go, unless he blessed him*. He perseveres in his importunity, and will not suffer our Lord to extricate himself; who was thereupon detained by him till the break of day: when, the desires of the patriarch being sufficiently

* No mistake is possible here, because the person who wrestled with Jacob is called *both God and man*: neither is he called *God* in any other than the sublimest sense of the word: because he not only *blesse*s and *answers prayer*, but the sight of him, like that of the ineffable Jehovah, would have been death to Jacob, but for uncommon mercy shewn on the occasion; in memory of which extraordinary preservation he calls the place *Peniel*: saying, *for I have seen God face to face, and MY LIFE IS PRESERVED*.

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kindled to make him enjoy the divine protection the more, and his faith being drawn out into due act and strength, by the seeming rejection he met with, he obtains the blessing solicited; but not without receiving a temporary dislocation of his thigh: in token, that our Lord's submission to be overcome was voluntary, designed, and gracious—that the same hand which lamed could have destroyed him—that a sense of the majesty of God should ever temper our freedom and importunity with him—that Jacob should always be obliged to remember how great a favor had been vouchsafed to him, of the premature (if I may so speak) or rather, *anticipated* incarnation of Christ for his sake, and never be able to doubt his acceptance again—that he, and all who with him obtain the divine blessing, must also expect, like him, the divine chastisements; crosses and sufferings, as well as comforts—and lastly, as a figure or type both to him and the church, that all our highest exercises of devotion, like this unexampled one of Jacob, all our spiritual successes with God and victories by prayer, are continually marked with frailty and imperfection, of which to abase us we shall always have a lively and painful feeling. Jacob was honored and blessed, but at the same time humbled. *He halted upon his thigh.* Every step he took in his temporal journey, like every step the believer takes in his spiritual one, was attended with a sense of weakness and inability. And as the patriarch
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approved not, but was uneasy under his lameness, so all the miscarriages and defects of the believer, his impotency to walk in all the commandments and ordinances of God with perfect spiritual soundness and strength, are sensibly, sorely, and habitually disagreeable to him. The best men have inequalities in their walk, but their inequalities are always different from those of other men, both in number and nature, as the dislocation of Jacob's thigh was not a common thing, but an infliction of a supernatural kind.

Not to dwell, however, on these circumstances, let us come to the principal subject suggested by this story, namely, that of PERSEVERING, IMPORTUNATE PRAYER: of which no other instance so great (excepting Jesus Christ himself) can be found in all the word of God. For, supposing Jacob to have parted from his family at midnight, and not before, (which is hardly likely) he must have held the person of Christ, and refused to let him go, for probably *five or six hours together*. For it is said, *as he passed over Peniel*, the spot where this conflict happened, *the sun rose upon him*: which must be about six o'clock in the morning, as we may gather from the season of the year: it being just after Laban's cattle had brought forth their young. So that the interval on the lowest computation, allotted to this holy struggle of Jacob with his Maker, must be, reckoning from midnight to sun-rise, at least *five or six hours*! Which shall we admire most,

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the sacred obstinacy of Jacob, or the mercy of his divine antagonist, *whose delights were with the sons of men before the foundation of the world*; and who on this occasion seems pleased with wearing that shape he had put on, and condescended to be touched, handled, and held for so long a time as this, by a sinful mortal: what encouragement does this last circumstance afford to our prayers, by assuring them, if importunate, of success: and what a striking lesson is the former consideration, of the propriety and duty of mighty fervor in prayer!

Against *all prayer* it may by infidels be objected, that it is vain and impertinent, if not irreligious, because it pretends to tell the Almighty our wants, who cannot need, or receive, any information from us, on this or any other point. And against *importunate Prayer* it may be objected, that it must be absurd and arrogant, because it pretends to move the fixed, immoveable decrees of the Almighty, according to the line of direction which we would have them take. In *this* case the Almighty is treated as an irresolute, changeable being, wrought upon by his creature: in the *former*, as a being not omniscient, not acquainted with all things, but needing instruction from us. In answer to which it may be said, that if true prayer be, what it is confessed to be, inspired into a creature from above*, it will follow,

* Rom. viii. *It is the Holy SPIRIT which helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered, or with such mighty desires in prayer, as are too big for utterance.*

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that the Supreme Being, by infusing prayer into *us*, teaches *us our* wants, of which prayer is only the feeling or expression, and that, therefore, where any one is *importunate* in prayer, because such importunity is an influence from above, it follows, that such importunity, and the end connected with that mean, have a place in the fixed, unalterable divine decrees; that the blessings sought for importunately, were in the divine mind decreed to be bestowed: in consequence of which decree, and as the way, and best way, of receiving which blessings, this importunity to ask was injected into the creature. So that there is at once an infallible connection between importunate prayer, and obtaining blessings on the one hand, and the unchangeableness of divine decrees on the other. Neither in this case is there any room for thinking, that our prayers, though ever so importunate, do either merit, or so much as *procure*, blessings: because it flows from the pure self-moving goodness of God, that we *ask* blessings as well as receive them; and we are only wrought upon to ask, because, previously and independently of us, it was the divine good pleasure and determination to give: asking being only connected with receiving, as the best and only manner in which we could enjoy, blessings. For without feeling our want of blessings, we cannot know their true worth, and so cannot enjoy them. But *if we feel the want of them*, the *expression* of that want before him, who alone can supply it, or prayer to God,

God, is unavoidable. Therefore, prayer is not only the best, but the only manner in which we can receive, so as most to enjoy, spiritual, and all other, mercies.

In a word, the Almighty first determines to give, what cannot be enjoyed or acknowledged without our feeling the want of it. Hereupon the Almighty determines, that a sense of want producing prayer and importunity, shall also be given. Thus are the divine favours connected with our prayers, as being, in the nature of things, the ground of our enjoying those favours; but not in any wise as being the *cause* of his giving, only as the *effect* of his original and prior determination to give, and as the most beneficial manner of conveying, them to us.

To instance in a parallel case: *Our Lord made as though he would have gone farther, but they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is towards evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them.*

Now to make their importunity the cause of our Lord's tarrying with them, is to make him appear weak, neither knowing his own mind, nor what was best to be done: the contrary to which must be true, from the expression *he made as though*, which sufficiently proves what was the state and determination of his mind, to *continue there, and not to go further*. But why then did he *make as though* he would have gone farther? Plainly to answer that end, which it *did* answer; namely, to raise their desires
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after his divine company and instruction to an higher pitch, the natural effect of which desires was their persuation. I need not ask why he wished their desires after his heavenly conversation to be increased. It was, no doubt, that they might think themselves the happier in enjoying, in proportion to the difficulty they had in obtaining, it. Their persuading our Lord, therefore, was not the cause but the effect of his prior, independent, and spontaneous intention to tarry with them all night: and the importunity excited in them, was a gracious contrivance of our Lord's, for the single sake of increasing their happiness, in receiving what they asked.

Take another illustration. *In the first year of Darius, the son of Abasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, I, Daniel, (says that prophet) understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the Prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.* Here is the time fixed in the divine counsels for the precise length of the Jews captivity in Babylon, *seventy years.* And this term of seventy years was now expired in the first year of Darius (or Cyaxares, as Xenophon calls him). Nevertheless, the manner in which the restoration of the Jews shall be effected, shall be through the medium of importunate prayers. *I set my face (says Daniel) unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth and ashes. And while I was speaking, and praying, and con-*

confessing my sin, and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the Lord my God, for the holy mountain of my God; yea, while I was speaking in prayer—even the man Gabriel—informed me and said, AT THE BEGINNING OF THY SUPPLICATIONS, the commandment came forth—to restore and build Jerusalem. What, therefore, in this example, God had fore-determined to do, he contrives to do upon Daniel's humbly and ardently praying for it. Thus do answers to prayers, and importunity in them, co-exist with the immutableness of divine decrees, and flow from them.

It is easy to see how, in this form of God's governing us, our prayers *appear to affect and alter God*, and to *procure* the accomplishment of our desires, which is the vulgar notion of the efficacy of prayer; but, that in fact, they have, and can have, no such office or use. It is also easy to see, how, because we are unacquainted with the secret decrees of God, we are to frame our petitions according to, not an unknown rule of those decrees, but the dictates of reason, Scripture, and our regenerate nature, and that so, as if no such decrees existed. Thus we are to pray for salvation through Christ, as much as if there were no such thing as either *reprobacy*, or *the Lamb's book of life*, and as if the event depended on our petition, which it certainly does in a way of connection, though not of effect.

This view of the subject, first, prevents the Creator from appearing to be dependent on the
creatures

creature's acts and volitions : secondly, makes prayer, importunate, and continual prayer, at once necessary, and unmeritorious (for all the merit must be in the *suggester* of such prayer, not in us that *use* it ; neither can there be any merit in our receiving benefits thus in the best manner possible, but in him who contrived this method of our receiving them) ; and thirdly, this plan makes blessings, not as they must be on any other scheme, precarious and uncertain, depending on the effect our petitions may have on God, but sure and certain to the petitioner, and as infallible to be *obtained*, as ever they are *asked* : such asking being only inspired as the means of our obtaining them. As immediately as light is connected with the sun's beams in which it flows down to us, is blessing, and all kinds of spiritual victory, faith, and growth in grace, connected with importunate prayer, which is the channel in which they flow down to us. Every *wrestling Jacob* shall, sooner or later, find himself a *prevailing Israel*. It may be long before we gain our point : it was not till after *day-break* Jacob gained his ; but as surely as he succeeded, so, if enabled to pursue the same course, shall we. There is nothing to be won by sloth, but all by spiritual labor and toil. For however Jesus hath obtained, for those who believe on his name, all spiritual blessings, yet are they, and can they be, communicated to us only in a way of prayer and holy labor. *For all these things will I be enquired of by the house of Israel, saith the Lord : ask, seek,*

knock, and ye shall have, find, and be admitted into glory. The connection of Importunate Prayer with all the blessings solicited by it, is not only immediate, but *indissoluble: indissoluble*, so to speak, by God himself. For it would be to make the Deity work in vain, and use means without securing the end, to suppose, that he bestows importunity for blessings, without bestowing also those blessings. While the Supreme Being acts only with a consistency and propriety imitable by mortals, he can never disunite importunity from success. He might give a sun, and not give light, as was partly done in a total eclipse of that luminary at the crucifixion, but he can never give fervent spiritual desires, and disappoint them. For this would be not only self-contradictory in him, but a cruel sporting with the weakness and misery of his creatures.

After this observation, we cannot wonder at the amazing train of successes, with which unremitting fervor in prayer is recorded in holy writ to have been uniformly crowned. We cannot wonder at *Amalek's* overthrow when *Moses's* hands were lifted up: nor at the raising up of *Deborah*, *Barak*, *Sampson*, and all the deliverers of the Jews, *as often as they cried unto the Lord*: nor at the conquest of *Zerah*, the *Æthiopian*, when *Asa besought the Lord his God against him*. We must have foreseen, that, upon such a fast as *Jehosaphat's*, the children of *Ammon*, and *Moab*, and *Mount Seir*, must perish. *Hezekiah, the king, and Isaiah, the prophet,*

prophet, the son of Amoz, prayed and cried to heaven, against the tremendous invasion of Sennacherib, king of Assyria, and it was then of course that the Lord should send an angel, which cut off all the mighty men of valor, and the leaders and captains in the camp of the king of Assyria. Was Hezekiah sick unto death, and did he turn his face to the wall, and pray for a prolongation of his life? It came to pass afore Isaiah was gone out into the middle court, that the word of the Lord came to him, saying, Turn again, and tell Hezekiah, Thus saith the Lord, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears, behold I will heal thee: on the third day thou shalt go up to the house of the Lord, and I will add unto thy days fifteen years. So then prayer can conquer not only the king of Assyria, but the king of terrors. Who ever heard of a mere mortal repelling death himself? This hath prayer done.

*Ezra fasted and besought God, and God was intreated of him respecting the rebuilding of Jerusalem. Abasuerus, the magnificent and august, must be moved to follow, what Nehemiah had, and more than he had, solicited in his closet, with weeping, and mourning certain days, and fasting and praying before the God of heaven. Esther, and the Jews of her time, kept a fast, and neither ate nor drank for three days, (that is for one whole day, and part of two days) and Haman's counsel against the Jews, and malice against Mordecai, shall not only not prosper, but Haman shall be hung upon a gallows, Mordecai advanced in his room, and
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the Jews have *light, and gladness, and joy, and honor.*

Examples of the power of importunate prayer are endless: let one more suffice. St. James shall deliver it. *The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.* Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed that it might not rain, and it rained not for the space of three years and six months; and he prayed again, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth brought forth her increase. What an example this! It had been extraordinary for God to have let a single shower of rain depend on a sinful mortal's prayer: it had been more extraordinary for God to have listened to a sinful mortal's prayer, so as to prevent its raining for a month; that there should be no rain for six months; for a whole year; for two whole years; for three years and six months, in consequence of a poor mortal's prayer to that purpose, would be past belief, if God himself did not assure us of it. Prayer, energetic prayer, can do any thing. And the observation that Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, is here of great importance, and is manifestly intended to shew, that though the believer is subject to infirmities, yet his prayers shall nevertheless speed: for it was under these very circumstances that Elias was heard.

But, as the man who said * the votive tablets of such as had been preserved at sea, were proofs of the power of prayers and vows, was asked

* Vide Cicero de Nat. Deorum.

by Diagoras, whether none ever perished at sea who had made prayers and vows, so it may be enquired, whether there are no instances of the inefficacy and useflessness of importunate prayer, in contrariety to the above examples of its efficacy and usefulness? To this I answer: that there is a *spurious kind of importunity*, which not only often miscarries, but also never succeeds on its own account; and it is distinguishable by some or other of the following, amongst other marks: it is either sudden, and not habitual; or it is not subject to the pure will and wisdom of God, but retains much of self-will and self-conceit; or it prescribes time and manner to the Almighty, instead of submitting both to him: or it distrusts the goodness, as it pretends to direct the wisdom, of God: or it acts in opposition to the analogy of faith, expecting that in this *wilderness* state of the church, which is only to be enjoyed in *Canaan*, or heaven: or it consults no promise, but merely the dictate of its own choice: and it has, usually, for its object, the gratification of a self-righteous spirit.

But with respect to true, humble, self-distrusting, evangelical importunity in prayer, (of which Jacob's is every way a pattern) it is impossible, unless the Almighty can act in a self-contradictory manner, that any instances should be found of its inefficacy and want of success. Indeed, the very reason which makes importunity in prayer necessary, may make *delays*, or *suspence*, in answering it necessary too. Nevertheless, it is certain, that if not *immediately*.

diately, yet speedily God will avenge his own elect which cry day and night unto him. And another thing is also certain, that the man who is sincerely importunate for deliverance from besetting sins, is the only man that will not hence encourage himself in sloth or licentiousness: the very principle of his importunity making such an abuse of this doctrine impossible. The importunate to be preserved from sin cannot, as such, lightly indulge himself in it on any pretence whatever. Indeed, to be even *sincere* in our prayers, is more unusual than we are apt to think. There appears to be great weight, and knowledge of human self-deceit, in the confession of *St. Austin*, who acknowledges, that though his conscience obliged him to pray, when young, against *youthful lusts*, his remaining inclination to them was such, that he believes he wished at bottom *not to be heard*. *He that trusteth his own heart is a fool*, says *Solomon*. The strain of our prayers may tempt us to think we are sincere, when practice immediately afterwards shall prove the contrary. As the courtier mentioned by *Epicætetus*, no doubt, thought his resolutions true, that upon being restored from banishment, he would never more frequent levees of state, or ambitiously seek places and emoluments: but alas! (says *Epicætetus*) letters of invitation to court from Cæsar met him, as soon as he left my house; and instantly he became more courtly than ever, and could return the gods thanks for the honors heaped upon him.

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It seems, however, very material to add, what by some might possibly be overlooked on this subject, that man, by reason of sin, standing before God in the relation of a criminal and traitor to an offended sovereign, must never expect favors to be granted him in this way of importunity, or in any other, as though he had been a dutiful subject and favorite of his prince, until he is reconciled to him, by suing out the atoneing blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, by faith. On which account it is particularly marked in scripture, that the PRAYER *of the wicked is sin*; and that when two brothers of religious character had each presented to the Almighty an offering, one of the firstlings of his flock, the other of the fruit of the ground; that their sacrifices were essentially differenced from each other, so as to be, the one, *Cain's*, wholly overlooked and disregarded; the other, *Abel's*, not only accepted, but declared to be so by fire from heaven, and for this single reason, because he offered in *faith*, that is, with an eye to, and through the medium of, *Jesus Christ, the author, object, and finisher of faith*.

There is one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, whose employment and office is, to present to his father, and our father, the golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of the saints.

Jacob conquers, because he wrestles, not with God absolutely, but mediately. It was the *God-man* who blessed him.

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For the same reason that genuine importunity in prayer must always prosper, *nothing else can*: no prayers but such as are fervent and inwrought can be accepted. For if, where the Almighty has ever decreed blessings, such a sense of their worth as will excite importunate prayer, is necessary to our enjoying them, it must follow, that where no such sense of their worth exists to excite importunate prayer, there those blessings cannot come: for they would proportionally be lost, if bestowed; consequently, in the proportion in which our prayers are not importunate, it would be as absurd for the Deity to answer them, as it would be for us to set luxurious food before inanimate statues; or, in the language of Scripture, to adorn a *swine's snout with jewels of gold*. Hence we find the promises made to prayer run thus—*They that hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be filled. I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground. He giveth power to the faint, and to him that hath no might he increaseth strength. When they seek me early, and with their whole heart, then shall they find me. The slothful man desireth, and hath nothing. This people draweth nigh to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.* Thus, as columns of air, if ever so high and broad, could have no weight, if air itself had no weight, so repetitions of prayer, if unimportunate, though ever so frequent and constant, can have no efficacy, unless unimportunate prayer can have efficacy; which it never can have. So that they are
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sporting themselves with their own deceivings, who from the multitude of their sacrifices, and the regularity of them, expect the divine regard, when fervor, and life, and soul are wanting in their performances.

Here it is easy to see, how warmth, or affection, is not only not to be excluded from religion as enthusiastic and wild, but is the quintessence of true religion, and that whereon its prosperity depends. Indeed it would be extraordinary if our passions were given for every other purpose but the noblest and alone worthy one: it would be very extraordinary, if that which contains the grandest objects for our feelings, should either require, or admit of, insensibility. *I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.* I shall perish, if unblest by thee. This ardor is a specimen of that which is perceived habitually by every true Christian. Not in reading, praying, hearing, giving, doing, suffering, does piety consist, unless each of these acts be full of holy passion and principle.

Are these things so? Then, to how few *real* prayers will the number of *apparent* ones be reduced? Judging by the above rule, it is to be feared, that many who pray constantly and frequently every day, do yet never pray at all. The *vain repetitions*, and expectations *to be heard for much speaking* (instead of for *speaking fervently, and in faith*) cited by our Lord, are cases in point. Nay, how seldom (if only *energetic* prayer be prayer) does the truly serious
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and regenerate Christian pray, in comparison of what he intends and imagines.

But what *occasion* is there for importunity in prayer in our present awful state of danger and trial! How unsuitable thereto is cold and phlegmatic formality, whether we consider the world as consisting of believers, or unbelievers; of Christians, or profligates! It can be but *mere decency* in those, who are in an unpardoned, unconverted state, to *agonize* with the giver of every good and perfect gift, for such high things as the forgiveness of sin through Christ, and a new moral creation. An escape from hell, an obtaining eternal life and glory, are things of such vast importance, as surely require the whole soul in imploring them. And, where these are entered upon by any one in believing, what an exalted strain of supplication should mere *gratitude* dictate to him, that he may never disgrace in the world by sin, the cause of his infinite Benefactor and Saviour!

So great and so many are the snares that await us in every possible age, station, and circumstance, that not a moment occurs in the whole course of our existence here on earth, where we have not occasion for constant and earnest prayer to be delivered from evil. We walk on a sea of glass, where every step we take without falling, is the effect of divine interposition and help. Not only the miseries, but the goods of life: not only our sins, but duty itself: not only our enemies, but our friends: not only error, but truth itself *may*
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be a means of spiritual injury to us. For the *goods of life* may take our hearts off the Creator to make us rest in the creature. *Duty and strictness* may lead us to self-conceit and self-righteousness. *Our friends*, by their good opinion, may induce us to esteem ourselves more, and to distrust ourselves less, than we ought; and the study of *truth itself* may draw us into mere speculativeness, over-nicety in judging, and remissness in practice, or what the Scripture calls, *settling on our lees*. Not that these, but the contrary, are the natural effects of truth, duty, or the like; only these are *perversions*, to which, by the management of Satan, they are frequently made liable.

That concern and influence, which *Satan and wicked angels* are permitted to have, amongst us their fallen brethren of the human race, is another pressing argument for an holy violence in prayer. For *we wrestle not against flesh and blood* only, says the apostle *Paul*, or against persecuting or seducing fellow-men; we do not oppose mere mortals only, but *principalities and powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world*, the apostate fiends, in whom first as sin originated, so by them afterwards has it been perpetuated, strengthened, and preserved. The reflection of the power these spirits have over us, and of their knowledge of the springs of all our actions, and where, how, and what bad motives can assail us with success and certainty, ought to make us hang in one continued act

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of prayerful dependence on him, who alone can controul them, and protect us.

But more than all have we reason to importune the Almighty against *ourselves*. The garrison of man's heart is secretly in league with Satan, while it pretends to fight against him; otherwise it would not so easily yield to his slightest attacks. For *he came to Christ* again and again, and *found nothing in him*, obtained no advantages against him. But innate in us is a *love of ease*, which, were we not already fallen, must soon make us so; and being so, confirms and increases us in our fall. Labor, in spiritual things, is a species of self-denial, and is something so greatly foreign to man's corrupt nature, that to use it vehemently, habitually and humbly, can be nothing less than a divine excitement and inspiration.

I finish with three or four very short remarks.

1st, That it should be matter of encouragement to our persevering vigor in prayer, to consider, that the time of this mortal life, in which alone we can have occasion to use prayer at all, is but short at the longest, and may be much shorter than we are ready to apprehend it to be.

2dly, That there is no case or condition so bad as to admit of a despondency and hopelessness beyond the reach of prayer. *Men ought always to pray*, says our Lord, *and not to faint*: EXERCISE IV, *to give out through spiritual cowardice and fear*.

3dly,

3dly, That as appetite for natural food, is in general a mark of natural health, so is appetite for spiritual benefits a mark of spiritual health. Where our desires and prayers are strong, the stamina are sound, and our complaints, whatever they be, not mortal.

4thly, That, as no man can be importunately desirous of any thing who does not use *every suitable means for attaining it*, therefore every truly wrestling Jacob will not only pray with ardor and fervency, stately, perhaps, like *David*, three times a day, and at other times, like *Nehemiah*, in a way of ejaculation, in the midst of business, but will employ *reading, hearing, meditation*, and the like, as well as prayer: he will studiously avoid occasions of evil, and anxiously seek opportunities of positive grace and strength. All christian virtues are self-consistent and practical. *Jacob divided his household into two companies*, added proper directions for the conduct of each, and used other precautions to prevent their ruin by Esau, as well as betook himself to prayer and supplication. If our hearts feel, our behaviour will act, as well as our lips express, the language of the text, *I will not let thee go except thou bless me.*

End of the FIFTEENTH SERMON.

OF THE SHUNEMITE'S SON RAISED
TO LIFE BY ELISHA.

S E R M O N XVI.

2 KINGS iv. 36, 37.

And he called Gehazi, and said, Call this Shunemite. So he called her. And when she was come in unto him, he said, Take up thy son. Then she went in and fell at his feet, and bowed herself to the ground, and took up her son, and went out.

THE use I am going to make of this passage of holy writ, is that of a *type*. But first, it may not be useless to prove, what hath been but too frequently doubted and despised; namely, the *existence* of types.

Now the expressions, *which things are an allegory, a shadow of good things to come, a figure of him that was to come, a great mystery concerning Christ and the church*, and divers other equivalent ones, occurring in the *New Testament*, and applied to persons and events in the *old*, prove beyond a doubt, both that there are such things as types, and that the scripture abounds
with

with them. Nay, it will appear to be almost all constructed upon this principle, if we consider the following things :

First, that *Adam*, as a fœderal head of his children* ; *Eve*, as having been formed out of a rib of Adam, in which state she is said to be *a member of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones*† ; *the sabbath*‡ ; *Noah's ark*|| ; the resurrection of *Isaac*, as it were, *from the dead*, when Abraham received him alive from off the altar, where he was going to be *sacrificed for a burnt offering*§ ; *Sarah* and *Hagar*¶ ; *Isaac* and *Ishmael*(^a) ; *Melchizedek*(^b) ; *Moses*(^c), who was *faithful* (or exact) *in all his house* (that is, in the tabernacle) *for a testimony of those things that were to be spoken afterwards* ; *Aaron*(^d) ; and the manner of his *inunction* to the high priesthood(^e) ; the conduct of God towards the Israelites in the wilderness(^f) ; the cause of the fall of those who perished therein, and that of the admission of their children into *Canaan*(^g) ; the *manna*(^h) ; the *rock*(ⁱ) ; the *brazen serpent*(^k) ; the baptismal asperision of water, when the *children of Israel walked dry-shod through the Red Sea*(^l) ; the *song of Moses*(^m) thereupon, which is expressly called the *song of the Lamb* ; the

* Rom. v. 14, et infra. † Eph. v. 31, 32. Gen. ii. 23, 24. ‡ Col. ii. 16. Heb. iv. Ez. xx. 12. || 1 Pet. iii. 21. § Heb. xi. 19. ¶ Gal. iv. 22, 23, 24. (^a) Ibidem. (^b) Heb. vii. *passim*. (^c) Heb. iii. 5. (^d) Heb. viii. 4, 5. (^e) Heb. v. 4, 5. (^f) Heb. iv, and v. ch^s. 1 Cor. x. 11. (^g) Ibidem. (^h) 1 Cor. x. 3, 4. John vi. 32, et infra. (ⁱ) 1 Cor. x. 4. (^k) John iii. 14. (^l) 1 Cor. x. 2. (^m) Rev. xv. 3.

Passover(ⁿ) ; and that minute circumstance, *a bone of it shall not be broken*(^o) ; the *tabernacle*(^p) ; the *holy of holies*(^q) ; the *blood of the sacrifices*(^r) ; nay, even so low a particular as the *burning of the bodies of those beasts, whose blood was brought into the sanctuary, without the camp*(^s) ; *Egypt*(^t) ; *Sodom*(^u) ; *Mount Sinai, in Arabia*(^w) ; *Elias*(^x) ; the restoration of the Jews, from the Babylonish captivity, by *Cyrus*(^y) ; are all (with very many more that might be mentioned) exhibited to us as types by God himself.

Secondly, *Things are written in the Psalms concerning me*, says Christ(^z), and in *all the prophets from Samuel** (the supposed author of the books of Joshua and Judges, and of the two books under his name) down to *Malachi*. *Moses spake of him*†. *All the prophets gave witness to him*‡ : but their books had a present, primary meaning ; therefore, because they are said to have also a remote, secondary one, referring to Christ, they must be typical. And such, it is confessed on all hands, is the sense of the *whole book of Canticles*.

Thirdly, Arguing from analogy, if the above men and things were typical, it will follow, that *other* deliverers, as well as Moses and Cyrus ; such as Joshua, the Judges, and David ; and other circumstances, which are

(ⁿ) 1 Cor. v. vii.

• Ex. xii. 46. John xix. 36.

(^p) (^q) (^r) Heb. xix. 7, *et infra*.

(^s) Heb. xxiii. 11.

(^t) (^u) Rev. xi. 8.

(^w) Gal. iv. 24, 25.

(^x) Mal. iv. 5.

Luke i. 17. Matt. xvii. 12.

(^y) Luke iv. 21.

(^z) Luke xxiv. 44.

* Acts iii. 24.

† John v. 46.

‡ Acts x. 43.

much more important, and strikingly picturesque, than some now mentioned, *do serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly truths*: So that subtracting from scripture, all the many declared types, and all the analogical ones, and the many *accommodations*, as they are called, very little can remain of the whole scripture (excepting always the moral and doctrinal parts) which is not undoubtedly typical: and perhaps *none* of it will remain, if we duly weigh those expressions, *The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy**; and, *No scripture is of private interpretation*†.

Indeed it would be unaccountable were it otherwise: for then a large portion of that book, designed for the immediate instruction of all in all ages, must be only local and temporary: not very important; or necessary to us, but merely entertaining or curious; not adapted to the public and general use, but confined to theirs, for whom, in times long since forgotten, it was primarily written. Add to which, that the bulk of men being of plain capacities, need, like children, every help to their understandings: such as cuts and pictures; that is, *types*. And the divine method of salvation being contrary to the natural apprehensions of all mankind without exception, such help of types is necessary to the wise as well as to the weak. So that it was reasonable to expect, that the Bible should assert nothing *in words*, (whose sense is at the best capable of perversion) without affording drawings

* Rev. xix. 10.

† 2 Pet. i. 20.

and models in things: a circumstance which considerably exalts the holy writings above all others, because it makes the texture and formation of the word of God to be as wise and wonderful as the works of God. So we read, *Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name;* and again, *Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold the wonderful things of thy law:* and again, *without a parable spake he not unto them.*

But it is time to enter upon the contemplation of *Elisha raising the Shunemite's son to life*; in which, and in other miracles, if there be found a grand outline strongly representing doctrines elsewhere inculcated, there can at least be no harm in observing such resemblance, nor in supposing it an intended rather than accidental likeness. Let there be a painting or sculpture which contains the circumstances of some famous story, exactly and distinguishingly as they are described by Homer, or by any other poet or historian, and it will be imputed only to ignorance not to allow the painter's or sculptor's design therein.

A woman of *Shunem* beseeches Elisha to restore her dead child to life; which is at length complied with, but in such a manner, that this great temporal miracle appears in every part to be highly imitative of that *moral, or spiritual, resurrection*, of which the great prophet of the house of God, whose character perfectly corresponds to the import of the name *Elisha, the God-Savior*, is the author.

But before we consider the miracle, or its interpretation, it may be profitable to remark the

the extraordinary *faith* of this Shunemite. For from the foundation of the world had it never been heard of, or seen in any one instance, that a spirit, once gone forth from the body and from this earth, returned thither again. And therefore, we are instructed by the pattern of this woman, to set no bounds either to the power or the goodness of God ; but *to open our mouths wide*, that is, *to enlarge our expectations*, and, agreeably to the promise, *they shall be filled*. *All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive*. It is both the crime and the folly of *unbelief* to limit the Holy One of Israel ; while it is the privilege and duty of *faith*, in hope to believe against hope, and to think magnificently of God, as of a being *who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think*.

What a lively image does this *woman* afford us of *the church* ; *her dead child* ! of a child of God existing such in the divine mind and counsels, but lying at present in unconversion, *dead in trespasses and sins* ; *Elisha*, of the Lord Jesus Christ ; *Gebazi*, of human instruments, or ministers ; the *staff*, of the word of God ; the *method* of recovering the dead child, of the order of restoring a sinner ; and the *delivery of the child to his mother*, of the commitment of the renewed sinner to the care and bosom of the church.

Let us go over each of these particulars.

The church is continually described to us in scripture under the symbol of a *woman*, for the sake of pointing out to us the manner of
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our salvation, by the alone death and righteousness of Jesus Christ, figured to us by the similitude of Jesus Christ accepting the sinner, who truly believes on him, for his *bride*; that is, as one, not merely to be pardoned and saved, but tenderly loved, protected, and supported, by him: one, who shall share in all his glory and happiness above, and for whose debts to the divine law he is responsible and all-sufficient: one, to be loved, not for her own, but *his* sake, and on his account, by *the everlasting Father*; and one, to be devoted in heart and life, to her Lord and Savior, as the wife, forsaking all other, is to be true, and singly and ardently attached, and obedient to her *husband in all things*.

Accordingly we read, *I have espoused you as a chaste virgin unto Christ**. *Thy Maker is thine husband†*: *the Lord is his name*. *And this is the name whereby SHE shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS‡*: *To her was granted, that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white§*. *With gladness and rejoicing shall they (that is, she and her retinue) be brought: they shall enter into the King's palace§, where the bride, the Lamb's wife, having the glory of God, and her light, (or splendor) like unto a stone most precious, sits down at her Lord's side for ever and ever. The spirit saith unto John, Write, blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb¶*.

* 2 Cor. xi. 2

† Is. liv. 5.

‡ Jer. xxxiii. 16.

§ Rev. xix. 8.

§ Psalm xlv. 15.

¶ Rev. xxi. and xix.

The church is also compared to a *mother*, because the members of which it is composed, are brought forth, like a large family, not all at once, but by degrees, and at different times. *Jerusalem, which is from above, is the mother of us all*^(a). *Of Sion, it shall be reported that this and that man was born in her*^(b). *Her sons come from far, and her daughters from the ends of the earth*^(c). *The dew of thy birth is of the womb of the morning*^(d): innumerable and fruitful, and dispersed over the whole earth.

But the Shunemite is an express effigy of the church, not only as a woman and a mother, but in the act of *soliciting life* for her dead child. For it is both essential and peculiar to every real christian to pray for, and seek, the renovation and conversion of their fellow-sinners. And hence we find, that relations, friends, strangers, enemies, all mankind, lie upon their hearts in prayer for this purpose. Neither herein do they seek an accession of strength to a party; but into whatever sect they are dispersed, they rejoice at the news of any one's appearing to be regenerated, though in a connection not their own, but partly opposite thereto. The formalist, that wretched imitator only, and mere pretender to real religion, content with *the form of godliness*, but *despising the power* thereof, reaches not thus far. He either thinks the state of mankind tolerably safe without that great moral change, which

^a Gal. iv. 26.^b Psalm lxxxvii. 5.^c Isaiah lx. 4. Psalm xlv.^d Psalm cx. 3.

the scripture calls regeneration, and suspects of hypocrisy, or of heated imagination and superstition, those who lay claim thereto; or else he scarcely believes the reality of it, unless it be found within the narrow pale of those of his own sentiments. To be concerned for the spiritual recovery of others, under a sense of *the evil of sin*, the *apostacy of man from God*, and the *certainly of hell-torments as the just punishment thereof*, is the distinguishing mark of a real child of God, and member of the invisible church of Christ. It immediately decides our partaking of the character and nature of the *Shunemite*, *the church*; especially, if accompanied with those feelings assigned to the mother of the dead child in this story: that is, with a sense that no *Gebazi*, nor *Elisha's staff*, no minister, or any application of the word of God by mortals, could suffice, only the power of a present Elisha, of the Saviour himself, could avail, to the inspiring a dead sinner with new life. Under the most powerful means of grace, the church expects no blessing without a divine influence attending them from above.

Not less does a *sinner, in a state of nature*, answer to the description of the *Shunemite's dead child*, than its mother does to that of the church. For it is said, *there was neither voice, nor hearing*, in him. *No voice*; no true and proper faculty of speech, or of conversation, about *spiritual* things, is possible to us in an unregenerate state. Men do not, cannot of themselves, talk the language of Canaan. They
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are either ignorant of it, or indisposed to it, or use it imperfectly, or have learned it from others, and not from personal experience, or their own spiritual and gracious knowledge of divine things. Hence in no companies but those of spiritual persons, do we meet with a *conversation with grace, seasoned with salt, that it may minister grace to the hearers*. This deplorable instance of the fall of man seems to be that, which our Lord alludes to, in the ejection of a *dumb* spirit from some miserable, *possessed* objects.

But there *was neither voice, nor bearing*, in the dead child. No *bearing*; neither in him, nor in us, originally. *We are like the deaf adder, which stops her ears, and refuseth to hear the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely*. There is a prejudice in ourselves, and an odium from others, against hearing the pure gospel of holiness and mercy. It is disreputable to be found where the *truth* is preached *as it is in Jesus*. The ministers of Christ appear to great disadvantage to our minds, from the novelty of their zeal and doctrine, from the multitude, and, in general, low quality of their congregation. Though yet, it was of old, *the common people which heard Christ gladly**, while scarce any of *the rulers*, or of *the pharisees*, *believed on him†*: and our Lord makes it an evidence of his mission equal to that of working miracles, *that to the poor the gospel is preached; and not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble, are called; but (to their exclusion) God*

* Mark xii. 37.

† John vii. 48.

*both chosen the poor, the foolish, the weak and despised things of the world**. So that the *mean-ness* of a large *stated audience*, far from being an argument against the probability of that being the truth which they hear, is, where other things are equal, an argument much in their favor. But take away this prejudice. Let us, by one consideration or another, be brought to attend usually on the ministry of the gospel; still, if unconverted, *hearing we hear not*, as Isaiah speaks. We approve, and may defend, but at the same time do not receive into our hearts the *ingrafted word which is able to save our souls*. We hear for *others*, not for *ourselves*; and for any other purpose but the best and effectual ones. The terrors of the law do not affect us with fear, nor the free grace of the gospel with comfort, though both are proclaimed in our ears. Neither can argument draw off our judgement from sin and the world, any more than applications to our passions and hearts. And so dreadfully deep is this our spiritual death, that all endeavors that can be employed, or exhortations, threatnings, promises, reasonings, in all their different forms, have no more effect upon us to renew us, than the finest airs, or loudest thunders, or most feeling persuasions addressed to a dead corpse, could have on it. And as spiritual death resembles natural thus, so doth it also in another and very alarming respect. For, as the corpse, in the one case, is borne unconsciously and slowly to the pit of the grave, so is the

* 1. Cor. i.

soul, in the other case, insensibly carrying to the *bottomless pit of perdition*. Time is its funeral hearse, as it were : where that stops, the sinner is taken out, and buried in ——— Meditation must supply that blank. The mildest description of it would be deemed too strong, though the strongest would be too mild to convey a just idea of the reality.

Elisha stands forth in this story a striking model of him, who saith, *I am the Resurrection and the life* ; and again, *Verily, verily I say unto you, the time is coming, and now is*, (which therefore cannot mean the judgement, but the gospel only) *when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live.—He (the Son of God) quickeneth whom he will*. In vain is *Gebazi*, *Elisha's* ministring servant, sent on the errand ; in vain does he apply the staff (an emblem of the word of God) to the dead child (as it is written, *thy rod and thy staff they comfort me*). *Elisha*, the Lord Jesus Christ, must attend the preaching of the word himself with his divine energy and presence, or the sinner will still lie unmoved and unrevived. Hence the gracious promise of the Savior : *Lo ! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world*. And hence the speech of Moses : *If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up from this place*.

But how singular, strange, and almost ludicrous, is the method of *Elisha's* raising the child to life, unless we consider the several parts of it as typical ; and then the whole acquires

quires a grandeur and beauty plainly worthy the invention of its divine author. An observation this, which applies to those few uncommon, and, as some have profanely miscalled them, *absurd*, stories in the word of God: such as Sampson's destroying the Philistines corn, by their own foxes burning it and themselves to death at the same time: which seems to denote, first, the reverting of their *cunning* (of which the fox is an usual emblem) upon themselves; and, secondly, that all the subtil devices of the enemies of Christ and his church, should in the end defeat themselves. Elisha went into the house where the child lay, *and shut the door upon them twain, and prayed unto the Lord. And he went up (on the bed) and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands, and he stretched himself upon the child, and the flesh of the child waxed warm.* A very extraordinary and unprecedented form of miracle indeed, and certainly *unnecessary*, (for a single fiat, or thus saith the Lord, might have sufficed) except we construe it figuratively, and conceive it to be intended to instruct and enliven *us* by *doctrine*, more than to give life and eye-sight to the child by incubation. First then Elisha *shuts the door upon them twain*. So doth the Savior act by us in conversion. He takes us aside, as 'it were, from the world: injects startling thoughts, shuts out all ideas that might prevent their effect, and makes every thing stand off, and keep out of sight, till his instructions

instructions are sufficiently deepened. In this its beginning, as in all its after-progress in our souls, religion is, what the Psalmist calls it, *the secret of the Lord*: an intercourse between Christ and the soul, to which none others are privy: a transaction which *a stranger intermeddeth not with*.

Elisha *prays* unto the Lord—for every merely mortal type must prove its *inferiority* to the great antitype: who, being divine, can, without praying to the Lord, *say unto the winds and to the sea, be still*, and to the dead, *I say unto thee, arise, and they obey him*.

He put his mouth to the child's mouth. As the Lord God originally *breathed into man the breath of life*, and man became a living soul, in a natural sense, so in a spiritual one, the principle of living grace must be inspired into us by the same Lord God, the Redeemer. They who are born again, are so *born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God*. Mankind are a *valley of dry bones*, till a divine afflatus comes to make them live. *Thus saith the Lord God unto these dry bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live**.

He put his eyes to the child's eyes: signifying, that, in spiritual things, all our sight and knowledge (of which the eye is an emblem) must be imparted to us from the Savior. So we read, *they shall all be taught of God*. Sin makes us see sacred subjects in a false light: representing them suitably to our corrupt wishes and prac-

* Ezek. xxxvii.

tices ; namely, offences against God as not so heinous, hell not so horrible, heaven not so valuable, duty not so strict ; and, to mention no more, God not so holy, as they each respectively are. *In thy light, O ! Savior, shall we see light.* He must enlighten the eyes of our understandings, before we can see spiritual things as *he* sees them ; or *with his eyes*, as it were.

Elisha *put his hands upon the child's hands.* The *band* is an emblem of *action*, of which that part is the great instrument. Here then we are taught, that as all true spiritual life and knowledge, so all power, strength, and ability to act agreeably to our knowledge, all the actual exercises of godliness, are from *without ourselves*, from virtue communicated to us by the spiritual Elisha, the Lord Jesus. *He worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure. All our sufficiency is from him*, who is thereupon called *the Lord our strength*. As the earth can bring forth weeds of itself, but requires culture to produce fruits and flowers : so man can run wild, as it were, and degenerate of himself, but cannot yield the pleasant plants of holy graces, and the amiable fruits of the spirit, without the unceasing skill and care of the great husbandman. *How to perform* (as well as I could wish) *that which is good, I find not*, says St. Paul : who yet afterwards adds, *I can do all things, if Christ strengthen me.* Hence the emphasis of that petition of dying Moses for Judah : *Hear, Lord, the voice of Judah ; and bring him unto his*

his people : let his hands be sufficient for him. Elisha put his hands upon the child's hands——

And he stretched himself upon him, and the flesh of the child waxed warm. How cold is man in every part, till vitalized and warmed by supernatural influences. No religious glow, no fervency of spirit, no lively zeal, do we perceive in our duties, till quickened by the Savior. Till then, all is heavy, dull, and spiritless in our devotions themselves.

Nor is this *all* the mystery, couched under Elisha's extending himself over the child. May it not represent the concealment of the sinner, considered as such, from the eyes of divine justice, by the Savior who covereth and defendeth him therefrom, by a substitution of *himself* in the sinner's room and stead? May it not teach, that upon believing, the sinner is no longer regarded in himself, but as what he is *through the Savior*, who is the *propitiation for our sins*, and the Lord our righteousness?

This does not *perfect* the recovery of the child. There must be repeated applications of the Savior to us, imitated by Elisha's walking to and fro, and then again extending himself upon the half-animated child : a circumstance which also points out, that conversion is no cheap and easy thing, but requires the *exceeding greatness of God's power*, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead. In creation, nothing existed to oppose the Almighty ; but in the *new creation*, our sins, prejudices, and

various evils, are so much opposition and renitency to be overcome.

Not without a shock, and much agitation of mind, can we suppose a sinner suddenly brought out of his carnal state of death into *the land of the living*. So we observe the child before us *needed seven times*. His moral faculties have been oppressed and overcharged by sin, and, upon a new use of them, now endeavour to free and disencumber themselves of all such load and hindrance. The nerves (the seat of *feeling*) begin now to be susceptible of impression in divine things; heretofore they were callous: the head begins to be clear; heretofore it was clogged and confused. Life thus steals over the *new creature*, as it did upon the Shunemite's son.

How *gradual* and *slow* the process of this revival of the dead child! such is its parallel in grace. The most precious things, as gold, diamonds, marble, are long in being matured; while other things of less, or no value, grow complete rapidly. The work of God upon man's soul, doth not usually make haste. His dealings with us, in this school of time and earth, are things of too great consequence to be crowded into an hour. The creation might as well have been finished in six moments, as in so many days: but for the sake of angels first, and afterwards of man, that they might contemplate minutely and distinctly the works of God thus distributed into parcels, all things rose into being with intervals, which took up six days.

In

In like manner, the moral creation is not instantaneous but progressive. *The line upon line, line upon line, precept upon precept, precept upon precept*, cannot well be taught us in a day. The lessons of our own emptiness of good, and fulness of evil, which we appear to live on earth principally to learn, in order to supply us with humility to all eternity, might be expected to require not threescore years and ten only, in a state of temptation and discipline, but that number of *ages*.

The child was no sooner thus completely restored to life, but the charge of him is given to the Shunemite, his mother: precisely as the child of God, on his renovation and conversion, is committed to the care and bosom of the church, by her to be fed with sacraments, holy ordinances, and the *sincere milk of the word*, till the time appointed of the Father. Take this child and nurse it for me, says our Lord to the church, as Moses was delivered to the charge of his nurse and mother, by Pharaoh's daughter.

The thankfulness and worship of the Shunemite, on receiving her dead child raised to life again; and her situation, lying on the ground at Elisha's feet, finely instruct us; first, in that *joy over one sinner that repenteth*, which is felt not only by the angels, and the church in heaven, but by that on earth. For how great happiness is it to any real believer, to hear of another's conversion? And, secondly, here is pointed out the real and proper place and posture

of the church, ever lying at the feet of Jesus, her only hope and friend, and in the acts of self-abasement, adoration, and duty.

These particulars contain their own application, and therefore I shall only add a prayer, that the divine Elisha would make every one, who hears of this miracle, to be himself a subject of the same Almighty power; that, if dead, in trespasses and sins, he may find Christ a quickening spirit; that thenceforward he may receive from him, day by day, more and more life, light, activity and faith; and being delivered to be nurtured by the church till death, may, by all its institutions conscientiously, punctually, and perpetually attended upon, *go from strength and strength, nourished up in faith and sound doctrine, unto everlasting life. Amen and Amen.*

END OF THE SIXTEENTH SERMON,

ON

OF PREDESTINATION.

SERMON XVII.

EPHESIANS i. 4, 5.

He hath chosen us in Christ before the Foundation of the World, that we should be holy and without Blame before him in Love : having predestinated us unto the Adoption of Children, by Jesus Christ, unto himself, according to the Good-Pleasure of his Will.

THESE words were originally addressed not only to the saints at Ephesus, but *to the faithful* (that is all true believers) *in Christ Jesus* in general. And their sanctification and adoption is here ascribed, in a strain of peculiar adoration and triumph, to a *divine predestination*. To this cause therefore must be ascribed the sanctification and adoption of all true believers *now*, if the same effect requires always the same cause.

Hence therefore occasion may be properly taken, to examine and assert that grand doctrine of the reformed churches, *Predestination*.

A subject the more inviting, as it appears to have moved and animated St. Paul to an uncommon degree of gratitude and rapture ; but the more forbidding, as being not only difficult, but invidious, and in general of ill report. A circumstance this last, not wholly owing to the ignorance or malice of the enemies of this doctrine, but partly to the misrepresentations of its friends themselves. For to understand it properly, and to admire it genuinely, men must be either philosophers or good men ; if not a mixture of both these together. For it has an immediate connection with the majesty of God, the malignity of sin, and the character of human nature ; things only familiar to the good man : and also with the most abstruse parts of metaphysics, such as the structure of the will, and the divine method of surveying all things past, present, and future, under one focus ; things which fall under the consideration of few but philosophers. Consequently it might have been expected beforehand, exactly as it hath come to pass, that the bulk of mankind, being neither philosophical nor pious, and therefore not fit to judge of the subject, would greatly misconceive, injure, and reject it. And we might also have preconceived, that as the bulk of mankind allow not the sovereignty of God in *practice*, so they would not readily entertain it in *speculation*.

Now the simple definition of predestination is, that *some men, from before the foundation of*
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the world, were destined by their maker to eternal happiness.

At the bare mention of which definition many will start back, and refuse to hear the least reasoning; because they falsely suppose, that the following things are implied in the fore-appointment of any to heaven. First, That what a man is destined to, he must obtain, take what bad courses soever he may. Secondly, That if some are destined to heaven, the rest must be destined to hell; whither, though good, and taking great pains, they must go, because no one can avoid his destiny. Thirdly, That the Supreme Being must be *partial* to the predestinated, and *cruel* to the rest of his creatures. Fourthly, That on this plan, *grace sufficient for salvation* is not given to *all*. Fifthly, That a *state of probation and trial* is impossible in predestination, which must render men, at least the elect, mere *machines* in their actions. Sixthly, That *exhortations, and means of grace*, must be superfluous; for the elect would be saved without them, and the reprobate cannot be saved with them. And lastly, That thus *only a few*, the *elect*, will be saved, and all the rest of the world lost.

My method shall be, to attempt, first, to disprove these prejudices, and afterwards to prove and confirm the doctrine itself. For while these ideas stand before the mind, it will shut and bar the door against every entrance of argument and truth.

First

First then, we cannot but believe, that where the Almighty destines a man to heaven's happiness, he will adapt his disposition and taste thereto: therefore the destining any one to heaven, which is an holy world, necessarily implies the destining also to that person an *holy disposition and taste*. And so the text places the matter. *Chosen before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy*. And elsewhere we read, *called to glory and VIRTUE*; one not being possible without, because it is the essence of the other. Consequently, the very frame of predestination makes it impossible, that because a man is destined to heaven, and therefore must obtain it, he may follow the worst of conduct: for a destiny of *heaven* must contain in it a destiny to *holiness*: for *without holiness no man can see the Lord*: and only the *pure in heart can see God*.

The sick man who is decreed to recover, is also decreed to the use of medicine, food, or air. The tradesman who is decreed to be rich, is decreed to frugality, attention, and certain kinds of self-denial: suitable *means* are appointed as much as *the end*, both for this world and the next. Therefore, as where a man is negligent of his accounts in trade, or of remedies in sickness, it is a sign that the destiny of *this* man is, that he shall *die*; and of *that*, that he shall *break*: so, where a man lives in sin, it is a sign, and continuing always so to do, an *infallible* sign, that his destiny is to eternal destruction. Hence it is, that a person

person professing predestination, and living in wickedness, is universally looked upon as a *monstrous character*, by his brethren of that opinion. His knowledge, though ever so great, is suspected of mere speculativeness; his piety, though ever so flaming, of self-deceit or hypocrisy. Neither can such an one *speak* upon predestination, without an horror being felt by all around him.

Secondly, The *decreeing some to heaven* does by no means imply the *decreeing others to hell*; for no decree is necessary in the *one* case, as it is in the *other*. A creature left to himself will easily enough undo himself; but cannot give himself a new and holy nature, and so save himself. For *this* (but not for the *other*) an actual divine interposition is necessary.

Indeed the destiny of the rest is to hell, in *this* sense; that hell will certainly be their condition. But this does by no means follow from the Almighty's either destining *others* to happiness, or refusing to appoint *these* to happiness. For this their fate follows simply from their *crimes*; and what is more, their *impenitence* and *contempt of mercy*.

For, first, were there none predestinated, the lost would be lost, the same as now; only the now predestinated would then be among the lost.

And, secondly, were there no crimes, there would be no room for an hell, nor any opportunity for mercy to be either shown to, or refused them.

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The ruin of the lost arises only from their own sinfulness; and the decree concerning it is only that of common justice; which, infallibly foreseeing mens bad conduct, final impenitence and rejection of mercy, appoints them to hell. But whether these are appointed upon such a foresight long ago, or only to day upon the actual sight of their behavior and close of their life, is perfectly an indifferent thing: the event being in either case the same; and the cause of the event the same: and the decree concerning it neither more nor less just, or merciful, for the *an-tientness* of it: which thing arises necessarily, and only, from the nature of the divine eternal mind. Thus the reprobated from eternity are no more injured, or worse dealt by, than if they were reprobated at death only; and their reprobation is such, as is both of their own, and not at all of God's creating; and also, what is very improperly called a *reprobation*, being the *mere course of justice*, exactly as Arminians themselves believe of the matter, except in point of the mere *time*.

Thus the lost are lost of themselves, any thing in predestination notwithstanding: and the objection, that the non-elect cannot be saved, though ever so good and pains taking, is manifestly false. For they are only non-elect on the *foresight of their being BAD*, and either taking no pains at all; or, what is next thereto, taking them very negligently; or, (as all do
who

who seek not heaven by Christ alone) with their hearts not really humbled. All that predestination asserts is, that whereas the corruption of our nature is so great, that, if abandoned to ourselves, we should none of us be good, or take due pains; therefore they who are good, and do take proper pains, can ascribe their differing from others, and being saved, only to the mercy of God: which mercy is so much the *diviner*, and *more worthy the adoration of the whole world*, (and not the more *exceptionable*) as it resolves not to be frustrated in *all*, but in order *infallibly to save some*, proceeds so far as to overcome all resistances, and itself to work repentance and ingenuousness in them.

Which mercy also, obliged to exert itself thus on the predestinated themselves to be effectual, teaches how great the apostacy of the rest is; so great, as nothing but the extraordinary exertions of Omnipotence itself can cure or reform: thus *justifying*, proportionally, *their destruction*, while it *secures* the others *glorification*.

And this answer applies to the *third* objection, and shews, that there is no *partiality* to the predestinated, unless the beautiful divine quality of *mercy* is to be called partiality; nor any *cruelty* to the rest, unless the *justice* of God can be called cruelty. That some were created in full foresight of their so acting, that they would be finally damned, is true on the *opposite* scheme as well as on this; for all allow the divine foreknowledge: therefore the expressions

pressions of consigning unborn souls to hell, and damning them from their mothers womb, are no more applicable to Calvinism than to Arminianism.

But this objection will appear to be still less true, if we consider what is alledged in the *fourth* place, namely, that grace sufficient for salvation is not, on this plan, afforded to all.

For, first, is there not grace enough in Christ for the pardon of all, let their state have been what it may?

And secondly, is not salvation by Christ as sufficiently cheap, and open for all, as either God himself can make it, or words declare it to be? The perishing sinner is only to *look to Christ, and be saved* *. And *who-soever will*, not only has licence and permission, but is *commanded* so to do. The *brazen serpent* is set in the midst, and lifted up on high, for every one to behold it and live. Now, if we turn away our eyes, or shut them, we must still own, that it is nevertheless sufficiently placed in view, and that the light of the sun is nevertheless sufficient to show it.

As long as we find our natures possessed of a power of willing, and a power to repent of offending one another, with a power to believe the reports of each other, and a power to be loyal or obedient to an earthly prince, or superior, so long must we allow that all of us have the *faculties* for repentance, faith, obe-

* Isaiah xlv. 22. John iii. 14.

dience; that is, have grace sufficient to repent, believe, and obey, if we do but please to use those acts *respecting God*. And if furnished with such faculties, surely we *ought*, before all things, to exercise them towards God.

But we are not barely furnished with these faculties, but the Almighty sets before us innumerable motives, nay the strongest motives possible, to induce us to use them properly: compared with which motives, all those to impenitence, unbelief, and disobedience, are, in point of reason and worth, nothing, and less than nothing. To this end He adapts the *uncertainty of the time of our death*: adds his own most affecting *exhortations and commands to all men every where to repent, to believe, and obey the gospel*: puts conscience into us, to *drive us hereto as with a goad*: and *hedges up our way with thorns*, that we may not be able to *avoid* coinciding with our own salvation. For he orders, first, that there shall be no pleasure peculiar to sin, which godliness does not possess; but, secondly, that many pleasures shall be in godliness, which a continuance in sin cannot obtain: as also, thirdly, that there shall be no pain peculiar to grace, but that as great or greater than it, shall be undergone in a contrary state: and that, fourthly, there shall be very many, and very great pains peculiar to a continuance in sin, which are not possible to a state of conversion and acceptance with God.

And

And how winningly does he assure us, that *his yoke is easy and his burden light*. And what force and efficacy does he seem determined to give this system of inducements to righteousness and salvation, by presenting his eternal power and Godhead always in every thing to our eyes and senses: not suffering us to turn ourselves any where, without being confronted with his amiable glory and marvellous goodness: and sometimes, as it were, *stepping out of his way*, to hint to us in storms and tempests, how dreadful a thing it is to fall into his hands, as an *avenger to execute wrath*. Moreover that our salvation might at no rate fail, a Bible is spread before us, and ministers instituted, and sent forth as his representatives, to beseech us to be reconciled to him.

Now is not all this *grace sufficient*, at least on *God's part*, for every man's salvation? Is it not, I will not say sufficient, but *superabundant*? For ought not *ten thousand times LESS* to have been deemed sufficient, namely, the only once barely offering to a sinner, and under circumstances far less advantageous than these, so great things as redemption from hell-fire, and an investiture with eternal life and glory? And may not our Maker therefore impanel all creatures to judge *between him and his vineyard*, not whether grace sufficient has not been afforded to all, but whether *MORE COULD have been done for his vineyard, that he hath not done for it*.

Now

Now what predestination maintains is, that grace sufficient for salvation being afforded to *all*, but the corruption of man defeating it, the Almighty, to effect the salvation of *some*, *creates them again*, as it were, and superinduces a *new nature* upon them. Surely this is what no one could *expect*, or even *imagine*, God would do for any; but what still he *may* do, if his most amazing goodness pleases; and what, since all have grievously abused his grace, he *should not do for all*; nor for the *greatest* part of mankind; only for a *few*.

Thus the fourth objection to predestination, namely, that it implies a want of sufficient grace given to all, is untrue; there being not the shadow of a contradiction between *grace sufficient to save all*, and *grace extraordinary* which actually does *save some*.

Some may think indeed, that the strength of the corruption of our nature, which defeats the otherwise sufficient grace, is an *excuse* for our defeating it. But this cannot be, unless *sin* can excuse *sin*; or unless sinful acts can be excused, because they are produced by a *very great quantity*, nay an *habit*, and *nature* of sin.

These may follow up the argument, and pretend yet farther, that *our having such a nature* renders us blameless. But this cannot be, unless God, and not ourselves, is the author of that sinful nature; which surely no one can believe, so long as he thinks God to be light, in whom is no darkness at all. *God created man in his own image, in the image of God made he him.*

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Neither

Neither is *Adam's headship* of any avail to us here. For the ground of our insertion into him, must plainly be the absolute certainty, that we should equally have fallen in our *own persons*, as in him.

But then, it may be added, we *must, with any HUMAN nature, necessarily have fallen*; and *this excuses* our falling. By no means: for had we an *angelic* nature, we know that *it fell*.

It seems then, that a creature, as such, must necessarily fall. Far otherwise. Indeed self-sufficiency, like self-existence, could be put into no *creature*, being the attribute of Deity alone. But since we should have been preserved by the Deity, had we only continued *dependent* on *his* sufficiency, and since faculties and other things were afforded, to *instruct* and *oblige* us to *hang* on that sufficiency, there was no necessity in the least for our falling as creatures, but our fall was, what might and ought to have been avoided with the most extreme awe and horror.

But these objections, though usually made here, belong not to the subject of predestination, but to the *constitution of virtue and vice*, and to the doctrine of future punishments, and indeed to natural religion as well as revealed. For if there is any force in them, there can be no such thing as praise or blame, for any actions whatever, respecting *this* world as well as the other. For if men do wrong, and the supposed *necessity of nature excuses* them, there can be no blame due to, or indeed any badness in

in, the worst actions. And therefore all mens actions, not being able to be *vicious*, must either be *virtuous*, even when they are most execrable and unnatural; or else are *neither virtuous nor vicious*, and no such things as vice or virtue exist at all. *Not in all the universe*, for the same arguments will apply to all other beings whatever, and to God himself. In one word, the common rule of all men in judging one amongst another is, that *bad actions are bad, let them come how they may*: and thus we must judge of sin in general, if we would conceive of it according to either holy Scripture, or this universal usage, or our very natures themselves; at the head of which conscience seated, always acts by this rule, and inflicts upon us shame, fear, or pain, when we do evil, without the least advertence to the *cause* of evil.

No answer can now be necessary to the *fifth* objection, which pretends that *predestination destroys a state of trial and probation*, and renders men mere machines in their actions. For such a state of trial and probation is plainly implied in a sufficiency of grace afforded to all, and therefore hath been already shewn to agree with, and by no means to contradict, predestination. And if we are, notwithstanding predestination, in a state of trial and probation, then predestination does not render us mere machines, unless machines are capable of such a state: that is, unless machines are endued with *will, conscience, reason, and liberty*.

But again, every man has the fullest possible power to act as he pleases. Nay, in morals, no man can act otherwise. Life and death, blessing and cursing are set before all. God commandeth all men to turn and live: adding, *he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved. The crown of life is inscribed to him that overcometh.* Predestination affirms, that this is a true account of God's actual administration of all men as free agents; that thus trial and proof is had of mens characters; and heaven is annexed only to righteousness, and hell to sin. But predestination adds, *not* that men are saved *without making any choice* of life or death, *without conversion, without perseverance, or without overcoming*; but that if one man exceeds another, makes the good choice, is converted, perseveres, and overcomes, it is ascribable only to *the gift of God*: that such gift *be intended* to give these persons; and that such *intention*, like every one in the divine eternal mind, is *from everlasting*. In other words, that they were *destined hereto from before the foundation of the world*.

But it may be said, predestination *fixes events*, and supposes it impossible they should happen otherwise than they do; while a state of trial and probation *makes events unfixed*, or contingent, and depending upon the turn our wills may happen to take. Now each of these is true. For though events depend upon the turn our wills may take, and upon nothing else; which turn is so unfixed by us, that we ourselves

ourselves do not know, and are not resolved about it; and might, nay would have been, opposite to what it is, if we had so pleased, still the turn which our wills will take, being certainly known to the Almighty, the event, unfixed, contingent, and depending upon *us*, is not so, but done and over, respecting *him*.

Thus is there no opposition, but agreement, between predestination, and a state of trial and probation. And this way of considering the subject, reconciles those Scriptures which speak, some as if all was contingent, others as if all was fixed; one speaks of things after a *divine*, the other after an *human* manner.

One word more under this article, concerning those numberless passages in holy Scripture, which assert, apparently against a probationary state, though strongly in favour of predestination, *man's total inability* to repent, or believe, or obey; or to do any thing good of himself. Now two expressions of our Saviour will clear up this difficulty. *No man, says he, CAN COME unto me, except the father draw him.* And again, *ye WILL NOT COME to me, that ye may have life.* Therefore, that men are *unable* to come to Christ, arises only from their being *unwilling*. In which state of *aversion*, it is impossible they *should* come to him; or indeed, so essential is the will in morals, *perform any good work at all*. For no man can repent, *whose will is disinclined thereto*. And to believe, or come to Christ at all, a man must *heartily approve* believing or coming to him. Obedience to

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God,

God, unless voluntary, is no obedience at all. Nay it is a contradiction in terms. In short, where the *will is wanting*, a man *cannot possibly be, or do good in any way whatever*.

But lest any should suspect, that *want of will* is *not all* the inability of man to repent, believe or obey; I answer, that it may be demonstrated, that there *can be no other* inability in *moral* things. In them there is *no medium between willing and being*. But one is always contained in the other. Thus if a man *heartily wills to be sorry* for a wrong action, he *already repents* of it: such penitence being essentially contained in such a will. If a man *heartily wills to come to Christ*, he *is come* to him in *heart*, which is both the best and only true way of coming to him. Wherefore we read; *the willing mind is accepted: Behold I stand at the door and knock, if any man will OPEN TO ME, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me. Whosoever WILL, may call all the merits of Christ his own, and freely; Ho! to every one that THIRSTETH*. And so, if a man *wishes to give to the poor*, he is charitable. If a man *wishes to serve his prince*, he is loyal to him. The virtue all lies in the will. This is its only place, nay its only essence. The will itself is alone, according as it is good or bad in us, all the virtue or vice that can be in us. Therefore where the will is, each respective virtue is; consequently *nothing can hinder* our repenting, coming to Christ, and obeying, if we do but truly *will* these things:

for then we do them; we do repent, come to Christ, and obey: our real, predominant wills always producing the suitable actions, and never any other.

Now an inability, arising not from want of faculties or opportunities, but merely from want of will, (besides which inability thus plainly there *can be no other in morals*,) is not *repugnant* to, but very consistent with, or properly punishable under, a probationary state.

And therefore I proceed to the next objection, namely, that exhortations and means of grace are superfluous; for the elect would be saved without them, and the rest cannot be saved with them. But the Almighty treats men as free agents; giving all of them faculties, invitations, and inducements to be saved, not destroying any without, nor saving any but with, these, or similar methods founded in our freedom of action. Indeed he *might* save the elect without exhortations, or any means at all, as he deals with infants (though even these are not saved without means, namely, the merits of Jesus Christ, applied unconsciously to them as Adam's sin was) but this would not be analogous to the whole system of nature: where, though every thing might be done immediately by the direct power of God; though the fruits of the earth might be raised without any sun or rain, or man supported without food; yet *nothing is so done*; but all is conducted on a plan of instrumentality and second causes. Therefore without contradicting God's general method

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of

of government, the *elect* cannot be saved but by means.

And the *reprobate* (so called) cannot be saved *with them*, only because they *will not use* them : being rejected only on the foresight of their not using, or abusing the means of grace. Their *cannot be saved*, being only an impossibility that the same thing should be, and not be at the same time : that is, that they would use the means when they do not, and when, accordingly, it was *foreseen*, that they *would not*. An impossibility which would exist as much *without* as *with* God's *foreknowing* it. For a future event will be, and cannot but be, else it is not future, whether it be foreknown or not.

A few syllables will dispatch the last objection, which is, that if predestination be true, only a *few*, the *elect*, will be saved, and the rest of mankind lost. But this objection is equally fallacious with the preceding ones. For predestination makes no kind of difference in the *number*, any more than in the *character* of the saved or lost. It only says, like other systems, that the wicked, the unregenerate and unbelieving, shall be lost ; being such as are manifestly vessels of wrath, fitted (by their incorrigibly sinful state) only to destruction : and that the good, that is, the penitent, the believer, the regenerate, alone shall be saved, being all who are adapted to heaven ; and who are so adapted by the merciful and eternal predestination of them to heaven.

Not

Not one more is lost, nor one less saved on the Predestinarian, than on the Arminian scheme.

But it is time to come to a direct proof of predestination.

And the first argument I use for it is *ANALOGY*. For if all in nature, and all in Providence, is of God, and through him, and to him, much more must all be so in grace.

In nature; all things are and were created for his pleasure. He upholdeth all things by the word of his power. He commands the morning, and maketh the day-spring to know his place. He quieteth the earth by the south wind. The lightnings come unto him and say, here we are, what shall we do? He binds the sweet influences of Pleiades, looseth the bands of Orion, brings forth Mazzaroth in his seasons, and guides Arcturus with his sons. Fire and hail, snow and vapor, wind and storm, only fulfil his word. In providence; the wheels within wheels (or whole frame of human affairs) move whithersoever the spirit of the Almighty resident in the midst directs them. The Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. The good that is done upon earth he doth it himself. Is there evil in the city, and the Lord hath not done it? He sends evil angels (of sedition) among those who rebel. The deceived and deceiver are his, even they both are from the Lord. In matters of all others the most fortuitous, the lot; it is cast into the lap, and there shook, but the whole disposal thereof, what shall turn up, is of the Lord,

Lord. The race is not to the swift. The Lord maketh poor and maketh rich, distributes health and sickness; appoints the bounds of our habitation; fixes the number of our days, as the days of an hireling; and numbers the very hairs of our head, so that not one of them falls to the ground without our heavenly father.

Now shall these trivial concerns of our present short-lived state, be all thus under an express and curious divine appointment, and the alone, important things of a never-ending future state be undirected by him? Shall *time* engross all the care of the Almighty, and *eternity* be overlooked? Would not such a supposition make the Deity act, just as the sinner does, disproportionately, treating time as eternity, and eternity as time ought to be treated? If the general idea, which even obtained among heathens, be true, that *the Gods neglect small matters; and only busy themselves about great ones*, surely the belief of predestination is much more reasonable than that of a present ruling providence.

Can *heaven* be the only thing which God does not appropriate and assign as he pleases? Or is that extraordinary grace, which, in our present fallen state is necessary to bring us to heaven, the single thing which God is not the giver and destiner of, as he wills?

PHILOSOPHY holds up the train of *ANALOGY*; and asks, whether it is not more consistent to suppose, that *all being is self-existent without God*, than that grace, or holiness, the *excellence* of all being, should either exist originally,

ginally, or be afterwards supported in us, either in whole or in part, without God? And secondly, whether it is not demonstrably certain, that the divine being had the whole universe, with all its parts and persons, through all their duration, so framed in the eye of his eternal wisdom and goodness, as to form one beautiful and glorious whole, with no partial evils, but what were universal goods; with no sorrow, but what is necessary at length to produce or secure the general joy; and no sin, but what in the end shall defeat itself, and contribute variously (though undesignedly on *its* part) to the general and eternal holiness.

Certainly this scheme is more agreeable to sound reason, than the contrary one; in which God permits *real* and *final* ills, nay *eternal ones*, and is not the designer and destiner of the *real goods*, though *eternal ones*, that are: in which also blind chance must govern men, and the *divine* conduct too, being supposed governed by ours, is consequently governed by chance: so that thus, lastly, the infinitely wise God must both act without a plan, that is at random, and also *subjectly* and *dependently on his creatures*.

Now if God is the designer and destiner of all the real goods that happen, then the everlasting happiness of the saved is not only of his appointment, but one of the *principal* things of his appointment. So it must be, if the universe of things is, in all its parts and persons, one beautiful and glorious whole of divine contrivance and performance. So it must be,
if

if the virtue or grace, with which heaven is confessedly on all hands connected, is *his* operation and infusion, and not the fruit of our self-sufficiency.

What sort of a system must the universe be, when the persons made for ever happy and holy, are not made so by a divine destination of them thereto?

Let all in heaven disbelieve predestination, and think that they came thither, not by virtue of God's appointment and designation of them to that blessed condition; and how insignificant a being will the Almighty himself look, and how incapable of thanks from his creatures in heaven itself.

So we might conclude in favour of predestination by the *mere light of nature*. But the evidence in behalf of this question, is supported irrefragably by the HOLY SCRIPTURE; for there we first read the doctrine *in direct words*, and that in *various* passages: then, not only is the *whole* of our salvation said in these passages to be of divine bestowment, but *all the parts* of it are, in numberless other places, said to be not of *man's* workmanship, but God's. Besides which things, the subject is handled at large in a strain of *deep argumentation*. Next, *types*, or emblems and representations of it are afforded us. And lastly, where heaven itself is thrown open to our view, especially in the Revelations of St. John, all who appear there, not only are said to have been *written in the Lamb's book of life*, and to have had heaven *prepared for them*

them from before the foundation of the world, but do acknowledge perpetually, in the most profound humility and joy, that their salvation is of God and the Lamb; of him that loved them, and washed them from their sins in his own blood, and made them kings and priests unto God. Not unto us, they cry, not unto us, but unto thy name, be all the glory.

The text asserts, in so many words, that they who are *blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus*, are so blessed, agreeably to, or in virtue and consequence of, being *chosen*; and chosen *in Christ Jesus*; for his performances, not *their own*; and that *before the foundation of the world*; and that *for this end*, that they should be *holy* (not because they were holy) and without blame before him in love, God the Father had *predestinated them unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto himself*; according to (what alone befits the first cause, independent and incapable of being moved from without himself) THE GOOD PLEASURE OF HIS WILL. And lower down in the same chapter we read; that they who *have obtained an inheritance in Christ*, were *predestinated according to the purpose of him, who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will*. Hence it is that the eighth of Romans says, *whom he did foreknow*, (or had in his eternal view and contemplation to bless *) *them he did predestinate to be called,*

* Any other sense than this must suppose a self-sufficiency in the creature, independently of God.

justified,

justified, and glorified. Where the Gospel came, it is said, *as many as were ordained to eternal life believed*; and elsewhere, that *the Lord had much people in that city.* How frequently does our Saviour speak of the *elect*, that it is not possible to deceive them finally; that *these* at the judgement day shall be gathered together from the east, west, north, and south; that God shall avenge his own elect; that to sit on his right hand or left is to be given to those, for whom it is prepared of his father: that these were given to him OUT OF THE WORLD; and that many are called, but few CHOSEN.

And lest this election should be preposterously thought to be in consequence of any thing one man should do of himself above another, we are expressly told, that it is God who makes any one to differ, who opens the heart to attend truly to the preaching of the gospel: who makes his people willing in the day of his power: who regenerates the born again; they being so born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God: who takes away the heart of stone, and gives the heart of flesh, who puts his spirit into any who possess it, and CAUSES them to walk in his statutes: who begins the good work, and carries it on to the day of Jesus; who is the author and finisher of faith; directs mens hearts into the love of God: keeps them so that they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of his hands: and in short, works in them both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

If this be a true account of matters, then, had no such thing as predestination been mentioned

tioned in form in Holy Scripture, it might have been infallibly proved, by way of consequence from these declarations: but surely when we find both a clear, express, and frequent mention made of predestination itself, and every step of our spiritual attainment and preservation (with which heaven is indissolubly connected) traced up to God as the alone giver of every good and perfect gift, the *Alpha and Omega*, there can remain no room for hesitation, but the fullest proof possible is afforded to the subject.

And not only is predestination thus evinced both by formal declarations, and by the cause of the several distinct parts of man's salvation, but the constitution and shape, as it were, of predestination, its various attributes and qualities are revealed to us in holy Scripture *; namely, that it is *eternal, unchangeable, distinguishing, gratuitous*, (or self-moved) and *irrespective of mens deserts*, being the *cause*, not the *consequence*, of our goodness; *personal*, that is, limited to a certain number of persons; *comprizing some of the chief of sinners*; and only exercised *through Christ*; that is, the elect were reckoned in the public headship of Christ, as represented by him, *their sins* imputed to, and atoned for, by *him*; and *his righteousness* performed in their name, and placed to their account.

* Consult the following texts—2 Theff. ii. 13. Rom. ix. 11, 12, 16. 2 Tim. ii. 19. Deut. vii. 8. Matt. xx. 23. Eph. i. 4.

The election of the Jews to be exclusively for many ages the people of God, and alone repository of truth and righteousness upon earth, is a striking type of the predestinate, considered as forming a body or community, which, to the exclusion of all others, is the storehouse of true spiritual knowledge, faith and holiness.

The healing of Naaman in particular, and also the miraculous support of the widow of Sarepta, by the prophets Elijah and Elisha, when there were many other lepers and widows respectively in either place, are things exactly of the same sort with the predestination of every elect person considered *individually*, as the foregoing is an instance of the predestination of all the elect considered as one body.

But I need not insist, though one largely might, on types; nor on the sovereign manner, referable only to predestination, in which the gospel is *sent to one place*, and when going *elsewhere* is *forbidden*: nor on the circumstances under which many Scripture personages were called, some of them in the midst of crimes; as *Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter*; others not in the exercise of any pious thoughts, but in the midst of business, counting and receiving money; another in *climbing up a sycamore tree*; another in *fishing*; nothing very attractive to our Saviour, in point of goodness, being presumable from the *class* of these several examples: the two first being *publicans* infamous to a proverb, and the last *fishermen*, who are seldom the soberest or most regular people in the world, but usually the reverse.

I shall

I shall only add, under this article of proof from Scripture, that the principal arguments usually brought against this doctrine are all answered by St. Paul in the *ninth, tenth, and eleventh of Romans*; where, by way of illustration, he interweaves it with God's predestining, first, to call the Jews and reject the Gentiles; and afterwards, for the present, to reject the Jews and call the Gentiles. A method this peculiarly wise, not only for the sake of vindicating God's conduct respecting eternity, by shewing that he does the same thing in time; but because the doctrine is thus partly held from the contemplation of those who would not receive it, the unconverted; and at the same time both insinuated and *proved*, to the humble and adoring christian. Certain it is, concerning the reasoning carried on through these chapters, that it *does refute* all the principal and most formidable arguments brought against predestination; whether intentionally or not any one may judge. And *so* refutes them, as if it treated of *nothing* else but predestination; delivering frequently, in the midst of the *particular* subject of the vocation of the Gentiles, sentences of a *general* nature, which establish a *general* predestination: as indeed we might expect, if those chapters were framed for the *general benefit* of the church. It is also very observable, that, the whole Epistle to the Romans being a regular order of doctrines, the doctrine of predestination stands in those chapters exactly where it ought to stand. Again:

it is clear and manifest, that, as the only connection with, and introduction to, those chapters, is the mention, made at the end of the *eightth* chapter, of predestination; so, when *they are ended*, the *twelfth* chapter begins with just such an improvement as would be naturally made of such a sentiment.

Lastly, this was the manner in which the fathers interpreted these chapters.

But Predestination is proveable *another way* from holy Scripture: which begins with the beginning of all things, carries us down to the present day, thenceforward to the last conflagration; and afterwards shows us the manner, in which all things are settled to continue through all eternity. Can this be without a predestination? Especially when it is said, that *it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps*: and *known unto God are all his works from the foundation of the world*. Neither are the declarations of the whole series of events so expressed, as if things *might* be as they are to happen, but that *so they shall* be. And concerning the *bad* that happens, because we know the worst crime that was ever committed, the murder of Jesus Christ, was both by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, and yet reflected no blame on God, nor detracted from the blame of his murderers; so must it be concerning *evil in general*. A lively and long-drawn instance of which, is in the story of *Joseph and his brethren*: of whose behaviour it is said, *ye sold me into Egypt, but God did send me*

me before you to preserve life. As for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. And so we read of Nebuchadnezzar, whose tyrannies, though they executed the divine purpose in punishing the Jews, were yet criminal; for it is said, howbeit he meant it not so, but it was in his heart to destroy nations not a few. Consequently he was justly punishable; and in punishing this staff of thine anger, thou continuedst holy, O thou worship of Israel.

But I must touch upon another collateral support of predestination, namely, ANTIQUITY, and HUMAN AUTHORITY.

Here indeed I might quote *Plato* and the *Porch*; and the most illustrious Greeks and Romans, whether poets, orators, historians, politicians, or philosophers, whose works are sprinkled over with various testimonies to this purpose, that *all things are under an uncontrollable divine destination*. Indeed the whole doctrine of *Fate* wants only a few strokes from the hand of *Revelation*, to make it a master-piece of truth and piety. But *christian antiquity* is that which is here intended principally.

Now *St. Augustin*, who flourished in the fourth century, and wrote much against the opposite doctrine, says, that *the heresy of Pelagius was a new one*: that *predestination had ever been the creed of the church from the Apostles time*: and for this article of faith he quotes *St. Ambrose*, by whose sermons he was converted, and who lived about the year 230;

and also *St. Cyprian* who flourished in the year 250: besides *St. Jerome* and *Gregory Nazianzen* his contemporaries. By many councils, particularly at *Carthage* and *Milevi in Africa*, held in the year 412, and soon afterwards, at which were present in one 67, in another 217 bishops, the *Pelagian heresy* was condemned, and *Celestius*, a follower of *Pelagius*, was, as such, twice condemned at *Rome*, afterwards turned out of *Constantinople* by *Atticus*, patriarch of that see; and at length again not only expelled the whole western empire twice, by the emperors *Honorius* and *Theodosius*, but excommunicated. Need I add, that *St. Chrysostom* explains the passage in *St. John*, of *Christ's sheep hearing his voice*, by the predestinate; and that *Origen* interprets the *world* in that place, *God so loved the world*, by the elect?

Nor may it be useless to recite here, that *Austin*, the first archbishop of *Canterbury*, in the year 601; the learned *Alcuin*; *St. Anselm*, Archbishop also of the above see; Archbishop *Bradwardin*, of the same see; the first Protestant *Regius* professors of divinity in *Oxford* and *Cambridge*, *Peter Martyr*, and *Martin Bucer*; the two great lights and apostles of later times, *Luther* and *Calvin*; the latter of whom was a chief instrument in founding and framing our church of *England*, as the former was the champion of Protestantism in general: the other great reformers, *Melanchton*, *Zuingli*, *Musculus*,
Paræus,

Paræus, Zanchius, and Bullinger; that prodigy of learning, wisdom, and piety, Father Paul, the Venetian; all the archbishops and bishops, and almost the whole clergy of England, in Queen Elizabeth's reign; most of the bishops under King James, and that King himself, and King William himself; that most learned chronologer and divine, Archbishop Usher; that storehouse of all wisdom, Lord Chancellor Bacon; that pattern of piety as well as learning, Lord Chief Justice Hale; these all, amongst innumerable other prelates, doctors, professors, and first personages in the church, and in learning, were constant assertors of predestination. So were the first and all the eminent translators of the Bible; as the venerable Bede, in the eighth century, who translated the Bible into our ancient Saxon tongue; Wickliffe, who first translated the Bible into English; Tindall, Rogers and Coverdale the next translators; the Bishops, who improved the preceding, and published a new translation, called the *Bishops Bible*: and lastly, the learned men employed in that version, which is now in general use. Like these, Junius and Tremellius, who published the Bible with notes in Latin; Beza, editor of a Greek Testament and Latin translation; Diodati, the Italian; the Dutch annotators; the English assembly of Divines; Poole; Prideaux; Henry; were each predestinarians. And what should have been mentioned before, the most ancient English notes we have on the Bible, first pub-

lished at Geneva, and afterwards reprinted under Queen Elizabeth no less than thirty times, are entirely framed, upon this principle. Most, if not all, the Martyrs, certainly the eminent ones, and the famous martyrologist Fox, whose history is chained up in our churches for the people's perpetual instruction, professed the belief of this doctrine.

To this very deficient list of first-rate human authorities, both antient and modern, foreign and domestic, heathen and christian, seculars and ecclesiastics, philosophers as well as divines, fathers, reformers, founders of our church, translators of the bible, annotators, and lastly martyrs, who sealed their faith with their blood, all concurring in favor of predestination, I must add, that not only the Lambeth Articles, and the Catechism published by King Edward the Sixth, and the Questions and Answers in Queen Elizabeth's later Bibles, and the Articles of Faith at the end of the larger Prayer Books, and the Homilies of the Church of England; but the several Confessions of Faith published by the Church of Scotland, the Church of Ireland, and the American Synod: the confessions of the French, German, Swiss, Dutch, Polish, Lithuanian, Bohemian, Genevan and other Churches, do all, with one voice, affirm predestination. Nay, till within these few years, almost the whole respectable body of Dissenters, of every denomination amongst us, entirely harmonized with churchmen in this article. And to this day all our

old,

old, pious, and eminently useful, if not *all the useful* dissenting ministers are firmly of the same persuasion.

Did testimonies like these of so many the greatest, wisest, best of men that ever lived, confessedly so on all hands, *stand alone*, they must make the doctrine before us at least look respectable; but when it is considered that *Analogy*, which is the only certainty we have that the sun will rise to-morrow, raises the doctrine to the highest degree of *probability*; that *Philosophy* raises that probability to *demonstration*; while *Holy Scripture* confirms and *establishes* that demonstration, these august human testimonies cast I know not what degree of *new* glory upon this article of faith.

But what can be wished for more, in any controversy, than the evidence which arises from *experience*, and *the confessions founded thereon of our adversaries themselves*. In *experience*, it is remarkable, that things unexpected, and apparently impossible, are often so strangely brought about, that the bulk of mankind have introduced, though unconsciously, *predestination* into common proverbs. And by the way, proverbs, being chiefly drawn from matter of fact, must therefore in general have the next authority to Holy Scripture. Thus they say, *marriages are made in heaven*; and it is *better to be born fortunate*, or destined to good success in life, *than rich*; with many others of equal force that might be mentioned.

But what I mean principally here by experience is, that when good men of all denominations, lay aside technical expressions, and terms of art, as it were, in divinity, and speak only of what passes in their hearts, and from observations made thereon, they not only all speak the same language in effect, but what amounts clearly to the most absolute predestination. Against certain technical expressions and supposed consequences, some are inspired by their teachers with horror; but if you divest truth of those peculiar phrases, they will all alike cheerfully subscribe to it. For instance, they will all cheerfully subscribe to the following sentiments. That the turning point of our salvation is not of ourselves, but of the grace of God: That it is this which overcomes our resistances, and prevents our quenching the spirit, and effectually excites to improve our talents: That but for divine grace *they* had continued as blind and unrenewed as others: That they have no sufficiency in themselves, but what they receive moment by moment from God. Thou, O! Lord, hast wrought all our works in us, and alone makest us to differ. Thou must be the Alpha and Omega, else, they each profess, I dare not trust myself with myself, for not undoing all, and being lost at the last.

Hence it is, that *Arminius* himself hath incautiously said many things, which lead to all that a Calvinist can ask. And the best writer against predestination, a great modern

dern reformer *, probably speaking simply from his own and his people's experience, says, *that holy scripture does declare, that there is a special number, whom the Father chose and gave to the Son. Whose salvation is absolutely secured by the death and resurrection of Christ; but that, while there is an absolute salvation for the elect, there is a conditional one for all mankind.*

To conclude: it hath been shown—that predestination secures *holiness* as well as happiness, the means as well as the end; both which the contrary scheme leaves uncertain—that whoever takes pains to be saved in a proper way is predestinate—that there is no partiality but only mercy triumphing over justice, in this doctrine—that grace sufficient to save all *consists* herewith; as does a state of trial and probation, and free agency: which last it might be shewn is here not hindered, but benefited and improved: consequently salvation is here as open for any, as the Arminians themselves can wish—that exhortations and means of grace are not useless but necessary here; and it might be added, are not certain of any success but on this plan—that not one more will be lost, nor one less saved on this plan than on the opposite one; nay many more will be saved thus than any other way: because no man could be trusted to go thro' every thing properly, and finally be saved, without a divine destination of him thereto: the scripture teaching, that *we should all have perished, except the Lord of Hosts had left us a small remnant:*

• The Reverend Mr. John Wesley.

remnant: consequently predestination is of all other doctrines the most desirable to be true: according to which doctrine also, only the godly are saved, which all the world believes, and only the finally wicked lost: so that no one has right to think he is not predestinated, unless he can, what no body can, certainly know, that not even at the last, God may shew him mercy; and unless too he has no *desire* for mercy: for if he has any *desire*, that is an hopeful sign of his predestination; of which good desires are always the effect and produce. It hath also been shewn, that if predestination is *not true*, then the Deity must act an absurdity, in consulting for trifles, and overlooking the greatest things that can be—that there must be some self-sufficiency in the creature, and a greater than that of giving itself being—that the universe is either not a glorious and perfect system upon the whole, or becomes so *by chance*; at least not by the divine contrivance and appointment, for this infers predestination—that the Divine Being acts at random, and not as a common wise man would, by a fore-determination of his conduct—that Holy Scripture, while it assures us of a divine fore-ordination of the vessels of mercy to heaven and glory, *means the reverse* of this;—that all the holiest, humblest, and most conspicuous persons in the church, and all the reformed churches themselves, totally err in their ideas of divine grace—that maxims drawn from common life are false, though founded in matter of fact—and that the spiritual experience of all good men, in leading them

them ultimately to acknowledge predestination, is self-contradictory and deceitful.

Now after this removal of objections to predestination, and view of the arguments which prove it, and make the contrary impossible to be true, I would only ask, whether any one will allow—that God *hath not certainly* determined that *any one creature upon earth shall be saved?* Which *must* be true, if he *hath not destined* that *any* shall be saved.

Here I might shew, that many graces cannot come to perfection, but must be for ever hindered, unless this doctrine stand: and that the most heavenly affections, holiest practice, and immoveable devotedness, are the immediate tendencies hereof: but these things will easily be supplied by private meditation.

THE APOSTLE having, in the foregoing verses, exhorted in the predestination of
END OF THE SEVENTEENTH SERMON.
 through the death and intercession of Christ, of their final state, with great application, that nothing shall be able to effect their apostasy, not the fear of death, nor love of life: not that either evil angels, or the princes and potentates of earth can do, nor any thing that now doth, or hereafter may happen; not prosperity, nor adversity, nor any condition, or thing whatever, should be
 feared

OF THE FINAL PERSEVERANCE OF GOOD MEN.

SERMON XVIII.

ROMANS viii. 38, 39.

*I am persuaded, that neither Death, nor Life,
nor Angels, nor Principalities, nor Powers,
nor things present, nor things to come, nor
Height, nor Depth, nor any other Creature,
shall be able to separate us from the Love of
God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

THE Apostle having, in the foregoing verses, exulted in the predestination of good men to heaven, and the impossibility, through the death and intercession of Christ, of their final ruin, adds here, with great amplification, that nothing shall be able to effect their apostacy: not the fear of death, nor love of life: not all that either evil angels, or the princes and potentates of earth can do; not any thing that now doth, or hereafter may happen; not prosperity; not adversity; not any condition, or thing whatever, should be
suffered

suffered to separate them from (or put them out of *χωρισαι*) the love of God which is in Christ Jesus their Lord. That love prevents their apostacy, and therefore makes their salvation certain.

Now if the love of God in Christ Jesus made the apostacy of righteous men *formerly* impossible, we may *safely conclude* it would do as much *now*. And therefore, with great propriety, may godly persons in all ages be assured, that *they shall never be permitted to fall finally and be lost, but shall certainly persevere to the end, and be saved.*

That such an hope and persuasion is founded in truth, is the subject of this discourse.

It must, however, be diligently marked, that neither does the text assert, nor the reformed churches believe, any other perseverance unto heaven than that of *godly men in an habit of godliness*. Not that any may live in sin, on a presumption that they cannot perish; but that the principle of holiness, in the regenerate, shall not be totally destroyed by any contingences whatever; nor sin have complete and final dominion over them.

And it should also be carefully observed, that as *the upright in heart* are the only people to whom perseverance *belongs*, so are they the only people who will *not abuse* it. And to so great a degree is this true, that St. Paul himself, says of himself, that though he had preached to others, and was an apostle, yet, without the badge of not gratifying but deny-
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ing his sinful appetites, and *keeping his body in subjection*, he could have no reason to conclude that his profession was of such a nature as would continue, or that he was possessed of true grace, and capable of perseverance: nay that without this mark of true grace he *must be a cast away*. The mere professor may pervert, but he first *usurps* this doctrine; for it in no wise belongs to *him*, but to *others*: to those who are described in the chapter of the text, as being not superficial and notional, but *minding the things of the spirit*, and evidencing their interest in Christ, and freedom from condemnation, by a course of temper and conduct, formed *not after the flesh, but after the spirit*: which same *spirit* instructs them to *pray*, after a new sort, both for matter and manner, namely, with *groans for deliverance* from all sin, and to possess all obedience. Now to persons brought thus far on their journey to heaven, what unaccountable *cruelty* is it to refuse perseverance? Deny it to the vain and wicked, to the merely speculative, to the corrupt and the heartless, but grant it to the sincere and the humble; and that for the following among many other reasons:

First, because it would otherwise *misbecome religious persons themselves to be happy*. For who *ought* to be happy, while it remained *possible*, that he should one day be as wicked as he now is good; and that *hell* itself might yet be his portion at last. As no good man can trust himself for persevering a single hour, so without an assurance that *God* would preserve him,
he

he must, from the practices of Satan, and the inconstancy of human nature, certainly foresee his own declension and ruin: in which case there would be no place in reason for hope. Dejection of mind would be according to the truth of things: dejection, if not from a persuasion of his falling, yet from the possibility and high probability of it. *Certainty alone*, in a point like this of *eternal* consequence, can warrant satisfaction and ease of mind.

But what is more, because the better a man is, the humbler and more diffident of himself he will be; therefore without a positive assurance to him of a better strength than his own, of being *divinely preserved*, he would be the *more unhappy*. The more unhappy in proportion as he had *less reason* to be so: for he would not only *distrust himself*, but, in this case, without a promise, could have no *right to trust God*: therefore the greater his piety, the stronger his conviction would be, that he should one day fall and perish. And thus not only the hearts of the righteous must be made sad, but must be more desponding, as more entitled to comfort and assurance. And because it is *better not to have known the way of righteousness*, than having known to scandalize it by an apostacy; for not doing which no good man would rely on himself; therefore it would be *ineligible* to set out at all in religion, where there is a very strong presumption that we should abandon it, and consequently fare

the

the worse, for making any attempts towards it.

Thus it is easy to see that all activity in goodness must be damped perpetually, and many graces be rendered wholly impossible; fear would eat up all both our piety and peace; if it were *unsettled and precarious, whether a good man should persevere to the end.* Consequently it might have been *prejudged*, on a bare proposal to us of the out-line of a scheme of religion, that there ought to be in it a doctrine of *final perseverance*, to render it either lively, or self-consistent and complete.

But, secondly, the *laws* of God are *put into our minds, and written in our hearts*, for the *express purpose of preventing our falling away, and securing our perseverance.* And not only so, but it is made *the very point of difference* between the *covenant made with the fathers*, and the *new covenant* made with true believers in Christ, that the evil of apostacy should not happen, but be effectually prevented in the *latter covenant.* The words run thus, *behold the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant, not according to that made with the Fathers—BECAUSE THEY CONTINUED NOT in my covenant, and I regarded them not.* For, plainly to prevent such evil, *this is the covenant that I will make in those days; I will (not merely give laws as heretofore but) put my laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.* So that the believer in Christ who,

who, notwithstanding many changes and interruptions, is conscious of a general and unreserved desire to do, and to suffer the whole will of God, may confidently rely on final perseverance, may conceive of heaven's glory as infallibly his portion, and chant with David, *this God is our God for ever and ever, he will be our guide even unto death. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsels, and afterwards receive me to glory.* Which joy he may entertain the more safely :

Because, thirdly, there is a fixed rule in Holy Scripture, which in clear and strong terms declares (what indeed we must otherwise have naturally *supposed*) that all who fall away were never truly *sound at heart* ; and that they who are *not professors only*, but *possessors* of grace, must, no doubt, *continue to the end*. *They went out from us*, says the Apostle, *but they were not of us* ; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us. But they went out that they might be made manifest that they were not of us.

To which rule agrees the account which our Lord himself gives of the apostates ; *they endure but for a while, because THEY HAVE NO ROOT IN THEMSELVES.*

Fourthly, there is a fixed *positive* rule in Scripture, concerning the *perseverance of the godly*, as the other was a *negative* one concerning the *non-perseverance* of the mere professor. And that is, *the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth*

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them

them that are his. To which positive rule agrees the account which our blessed Lord gives of real grace, in the parable of the sower. The seed sown in an honest and good heart does not fail and rot, but brings forth fruit unto perfection. It ripens into glory. And elsewhere, the water which I shall give, says Christ, speaking of the spirit which true believers receive, shall be in them a well of water springing up INTO ETERNAL LIFE. The righteous shall never be moved. Whoso doeth these things shall never fall: though he fall he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand.

Therefore when we read of some righteous who forsake their righteousness, it must infallibly mean such as were only speciously and superficially righteous. They, who escape the pollutions of the world, but are again entangled therein and overcome; or they, who having swept and garnished the house, are afterwards inhabited by seven spirits more and worse than the first, can only be (such as are found in every church) greatly reformed without, but never truly regenerate within: and they, who were once enlightened, have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, but fall away, are also instances of the same kind, to be met with every day: namely, persons having a knowledge of doctrines, pleasurable sensations from a false persuasion of pardon and heaven being theirs; and the strivings of the spirit with man,
or

of good motions from him, without an *in-dwelling* of the spirit, without a solid, well-founded, and *holy-making* comfort, and without that *light of life*, which *changeth into the image of God from glory to glory*. It is the very case which our Lord puts, of men, who both *bear the word*, and *with joy receive it*, yet *endure but for a while*; having, notwithstanding all their religious affections, *no root in themselves*. What wonder if these *make shipwreck of the faith, and a good conscience*? We should have *expected* their fall, if we could have looked into their hearts, and seen their *principle* as well as practice. But on the other hand, what a wonder would it be, if a man, who hath a deep and divinely inspired sense of the evil of sin, and of the worth of a Saviour, and a strong principle of pure and genuine love to holiness, should, like the heartless and empty professor, do violence to, and break up, his new *nature* *trample under foot the blood of the covenant*, *abhor grace*, and give final, and perfect preference to *sin*. Which idea brings me to

A fifth argument for the perseverance of truly upright gracious men unto the end of their lives: and that is, that in several points of view, it appears to be of the *very nature of grace to persevere*: and as much of the nature of *grace to persevere*, as it is of the *flesh to fall away*. For while our corruption of nature would as easily quench the holy principle of regeneracy, as the ocean would a single spark of fire, and always strongly tends hereto, the

spirit is inserted into genuine disciples to *counteract* such tendency, and to *prevent* such extinction of grace. And of these two conflicting principles it is directly said, that the *spirit* shall *prevail*: that they *who walk after the spirit shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh*; and that *sin SHALL NOT HAVE DOMINION over those who are under grace*. Wherefore, if sin in any instance prevail, as there is not *a just man that liveth and sinneth not*, that advantage of sin is only *temporary*, not total nor lasting. *The righteous falleth seven times, but riseth again*. Though borne down by temptation, he is not a *prone* creature, but erect; like the generous horse, which by a fall finds himself on the ground, but cannot go on or rest there, as it is the nature of serpents to do. It is of the *essence* of true grace, when kept back from duty, like the magnetic needle disturbed from its wonted position, to be uneasy till it acquires that advertence and direction to God and heavenly things, in which alone it can settle. This *constitution* therefore of grace, to fix and abide only in what is good, shews, that it is of its very nature to persevere unto the end: for *settling only in what is good is such perseverance*.

So we learn, *righteousness keepeth him that is upright in the way. The way of the Lord is strength to the upright. He that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not. He cannot sin* (either as do others, or as he himself once did in unconversion) *because he is born of God: whose seed remaineth in him*

him, a perpetual incentive to duty and restraint from sin, and consequently a source of perseverance. *The anointing which he hath received ABIDETH in him.*

Again, as it is of the essence of grace to live in total distrust of human self-sufficiency, and always to hang upon the divine, which can never disappoint it, therefore it must be of its very nature to persevere. Neither will such disposition to live only upon God, ever *cease* in the righteous man. For a *continuance* in such a course is his peculiar and distinguishing attribute; it is said only of the *hypocrite*, *will be ALWAYS call upon God.*

Also again, whoever considers the *strength* and *depth* and *quality* of real grace in its several parts, will clearly see, that it is *fitted to last and abide*: just as he would think a bridge building firmly with stone was intended to be *durable*.

The CONVICTIONS of SIN indeed, in some who fall away, are often *violent*; for which reason alone (almost) we might *expect* them *not to last*: but the convictions of sin, which persons of acknowledged grace have, go *deeper into the judgment*, and are not confined to certain *fits of terror* and *strong passion*; they are both *usual* or *habitual*, and yet *strong*. These are like the *wind* in its *general state*, which yet is sufficiently strong to waft ships of great burthen to very distant ports; the *other* resemble a *whirlwind*, gone almost as soon as come.

And the FAITH of the regenerate (though not such an one as removes mountains, which some have had and fallen; being all the while, as the Apostle himself says, *spiritually nothing**) is so rooted in a satisfaction with and esteem of Christ, as the *pearl of great price*, and *chief among ten thousand beauties*; is so led into its ideas by a painful experience of man's own self-destruction; and is so confirmed in its views, by a thorough sense of the law and nature of God, and the testimony of conscience, that it plainly can be no *fugitive* principle, but a permanent one, never to be lost but with a man's self.

And the HOLINESS of the regenerate is *so pure in its kind*, not being wrought up into action by either mercenary hope or miserable fear, but by a suitableness in the soul to what is righteous: it doth so *center* in godliness, not being able to remain in conformity to the world, or in wilful sin, for any length of time at least, nor without peculiar restlessness and pain; and it so reacheth extensively to every thing great and small, public and private, social and domestic, which is of a moral nature; being at the same time humble and self-abhorring; whereas the holiness of *others* is either superficial, or partial, or constrained, or unhumbled, if not all these together; that it plainly appears to be too adapted to heaven; and, notwithstanding infirmity, to be too much of the very disposition of heaven, to fall short of, and not finally attain that state. It plainly

* 1 Cor. xiii. 2.

plainly appears to be something of a kind *vastly superior* to what they possess, over whom Satan gains a total and final ascendancy; and therefore appears to be of a nature to persevere.

But that this strong work of real grace in conviction, faith, and holiness, does of its very nature tend to persevere, *is positively asserted in Scripture*. For there we read, first, concerning those who have a *true knowledge of sin and spiritual things* afforded them, that, *even as it hath taught them it shall abide in them*. Secondly, concerning *real faith*; that IT OVER-COMETH *the world*, therefore cannot be overcome by it. Thirdly, concerning *holiness built upon the rock Christ*; that while any *other kind* is an house built *upon sand* on the sea-shore easily washed away, and not to be expected to endure: *this*, though winds and waves the most mighty and tempestuous beat against it, *shall never fall*. Let Satan do his utmost against one of this character, it shall all be in vain; he *must persevere*; for it is said, that even the *young men in Christ have overcome the wicked one*.

But further. That it is of the nature of grace to persevere, appears from this circumstance, that *all men require perseverance even in all common virtue, and in every thing praise-worthy, for the completing any character virtuous or praise-worthy*; and thereby do so much suppose perseverance to be of the *essence* of any respective virtue or praise, that, where it is *wanting*,

they naturally suspect a man either of *hypocrisy* and *deceit*, or at least of being so superficially endued with such good quality, as to render it (not what such good quality, if *real* could be) *truly worthy contempt*. And also, where we see any one WELL PRINCIPLED in any good quality, there of course we trust, and that to a very great degree, in his *immoveableness*. We never imagine that a *genuine lover of justice* will one day be *corrupt* and *receive bribes*: any one else might: nor do we ever expect that a *pure lover of liberty* will *change his party*; the *false patriot* might: nor that a man of *true courage* will go out in *cowardice*; it is the *mock-hero* who finishes thus.

Can any one, who has an exquisite taste for *poetry* or *music*, or *painting*, ever become *wholly insensible* to their charms, and *feel nothing* when they come in his way? Certainly not. Therefore, shall it be *morally impossible* to apostatize from a love of the fine arts, and from a genuine probity, patriotism and courage; shall perseverance be of the essence of true taste in the one case, and of probity, patriotism, and courage in the other: and yet not be of the essence of true religion; but *apostacy possible thereto*? Shall *apostacy* be *morally impossible*, where the *passion* for any thing is a mere *turn of mind*, but very possible, where such passion is *divine grace*, and a *supernatural change of heart*.

But another argument for the final continuance of the regenerate in well-doing is (and is plainly irrefragable) that such their continuance is *not*
vested

vested in themselves, but specially engaged for,
 and particularly undertaken by the Almighty.
 Therefore, as grace fails in an unconverted state,
 because its improvement and maintenance
 stands with us, grace cannot fail in a converted
 state, because it is the province of God himself
 to preserve it. What can be plainer than the
 following declarations? God is FAITHFUL
 (which implies engagement) by whom ye were
 called unto the fellowship of his son Jesus Christ,
 to confirm you unto the end. FAITHFUL is he
 that calleth you, who also will do it; that is,
 will preserve you blameless unto the coming of
 our Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord is FAITHFUL
 who will establish you and keep you from evil.
 He will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye
 are able, but will with the temptation also make a
 way to escape that ye may be able to bear it. I
 will never leave, no, never, never forsake you. I
 will make an everlasting covenant with you, that
 I will not turn away from them to do them good:
 but I will put my fear in their hearts that they
 shall not depart from me. I will betrothe thee
 unto me for ever; yea I will betrothe thee unto
 me in righteousness and in judgement, and in loving
 kindness, and in mercies; and I will betrothe thee
 unto me IN FAITHFULNESS. To him that hath
 shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly.
 He which hath begun a good work in you, will
 perform it unto the day of Jesus: even as it is
 meet for me, says the Apostle, to think this of
 you all, inasmuch as ye are partakers of the same
 (real) grace which I have. They who are begotten
 again

again unto a lively hope, and an inheritance incorruptible, are KEPT BY THE POWER OF GOD unto salvation. *Those sheep* which the good shepherd hath recovered out of the wilderness of this world, he *taketh upon his shoulders*, not trusting them otherwise for not running away again; that is, for not apostatizing; and thus *himself carries them home* to heaven rejoicing. *I give unto them*, says he, *eternal life*, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand: I and my Father are one. When the metaphor changes from a shepherd and his sheep to a vine and its branches, it is said of such branches or members of the visible church, as bring forth no fruit of faith and holiness, that they, and *they only*, shall be cut off and cast away; but that this shall never be the fate of those who *bring forth fruit*: (and we contend for the perseverance of none else) it is said of *them*, that they shall not lose their sap and wither away, but *be purged to bring forth more fruit*. And that this is the *peculiar care*, not of the branch itself but of the *husbandman*.

The point then is, not whether *we* shall be *unfaithful to God*, but whether *he* will be *unfaithful to us*. If *he is not* (and surely *he cannot be*) the business is done. We are then *kept faithful to him*, and so must persevere to the end.

Is the believer compared to a living stone in the spiritual temple of Christ's church? It is not made *our office* to establish or confirm *ourselves* unto the end: but *he which establisheth us together with you in Christ is God*: who moreover hath given us a deposit, or *earnest* thereof, *the Spirit*; which gift of the spirit is elsewhere (to represent the certainty of the salvation of its possessor) compared to a *seal* affixed to deeds in law, the intent of which is to assure one party by the obligation of the other. *Hereby* (namely *by the Spirit*, or by *true grace*, which is *his inspiration*) *we are sealed unto the day of redemption*: consequently, as by such gift God himself binds himself to the receivers to infallibly bestow heaven upon them, they cannot possibly fall away, and fail of that heaven. Indeed how can they miss of either perseverance or heaven, when they possess the essence and fountain of both perseverance and heaven, the *Holy Spirit*; and when such source of perseverance is expressly given by the Father, as an earnest now in hand of a future heaven? I must add under this argument, which nothing surely can be wanted to strengthen, that true believers are described as a *trust committed to the keeping of Christ unto the time of the restitution of all things*: which surely implies their not falling away: and that *this is the Father's will which hath sent me*, says Christ, *that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day*.

How

How apposite to, and explanatory of, the divine engagement for the final consummation of true grace in everlasting glory, is the *covenant of Grace delivered to David*. For though that covenant primarily contains a mere promise concerning the ancestry of Christ, that he should be of the house and lineage of David, notwithstanding sometimes idolatry and sometimes other great crimes in the tribe of Judah and posterity of David; yet still, besides the consideration that all Scripture must be of an universal nature, this covenant is manifestly said to be, a *type of the covenant of grace*. For when *Isaiab* calls sinners to Christ, *to the waters of life, without money and without price*, and argues with them the insufficiency of every thing else to make them solidly happy, he says, *bear and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you* (doubtless the covenant of grace) *even the SURE MERCIES OF DAVID*. Now what those mercies are, and how they are represented in the covenant made with David, the eighty-ninth Psalm will inform us. *If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgements; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments, then will I visit their offences with a rod, and their sin with scourges. NEVERTHELESS, MY LOVING KINDNESS WILL I NOT UTTERLY TAKE AWAY, nor suffer my truth to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness, that I WILL NOT FAIL DAVID. What provision*

provision is here against the *worst that can happen* to hinder perseverance; and how finely is it expressed by *David on his death-bed*, by a covenant ordered in all things and SURE. And how doth the tenor of this covenant illustrate those sentences, which declare, *that the Lord upholdeth all such as fall* (certainly not the wicked, but the righteous who fall) *and lifteth up all those that are cast down*. And, *this is as the waters of Noah unto me*. For as I have sworn that the waters of Noah shall no more cover the earth, so have I sworn that I will no more be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, yet shall not my kindness depart from thee, nor the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee.

How are all these arguments enforced, adorned, and exemplified by the *history of almost all the great and holy personages in either Testament*. What monuments are they, erected each as it were with this inscription, *to the glory of the grace of perseverance*. Look at the crimes of most of them, and see whether, if God had been wont to cast off his people whom he foreknew, he would not have rejected even these. Noah's excess, Abraham's lye, Lot's incest, together with the crimes of Sampson, David, Solomon, Peter, and all the disciples: for they all forsook Christ and fled: these, the capital names in holy writ, must certainly all have been the just victims of their own folly and wickedness, and abandoned to fall finally and
perish,

perish, had it not been for the solemn stipulation in the covenant of grace, *my loving kindness will I not utterly take away, nor suffer my truth to fail.* Indeed they seem almost to be exhibited as instances not only of the *praxis* of the doctrine of perseverance, but also of the *infinity* of its extent: that, though the *reed be even bruised*, and *the flax do but just smoke*, emblems of grace in its lowest state, yet shall not the reed be broken, nor the fire latent in the smoke be quenched. *Judgement*, or righteousness, (theirs represented in this nearly expiring condition) *shall be brought forth ultimately unto victory.* And as these are instances of *righteous persons marvelously forborne*, and *made to persevere*, by virtue of the covenant of grace, to their dying day, it is very observable, that there are *no instances of a contrary nature* to be found in all Scripture.

All who *do fall away* have nothing decisive, or distinguishingly gracious in their characters, but something, it appears at last, very opposite thereto.

But an argument how strong, for the final perseverance of the saints, is that ground to assure us of it, *the intercession of Christ.* In condescension to our weak faith, and lest the idea of one eternal pardon should be too great for us always to grasp, the atonement of Christ is represented as satisfying for our sins *before* faith, but the intercession of Christ, as securing that pardon, in an especial and effectual manner, *afterwards.* So we read, *if when we were enemies, we were reconciled unto God by his death,*

death, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his LIFE. If any man (not any who-soever, but any true believer, as the context shews) sin, we have an ADVOCATE with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins. He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him: seeing he ever liveth to make INTERCESSION for them—consequently their perseverance unto the end, and final blessedness, is hereby infallibly secured.

But while this intercession performs and transacts the perseverance stipulated for in the covenant of grace, there must be some regard in the breast of God, some tender love to them, to excite him both to frame such a covenant, and to constitute such an intercession. Indeed if this be true, that the Lord loves his people, and that in a peculiar and extraordinary manner, it must follow, that he might be expected to bestow on them continuing grace, and that having loved his own he will love them unto the end.

Now it is expressly said, that the Lord loveth his people with an everlasting love, and therefore with loving kindness doth he draw them: he calls them precious and honourable in his sight: his portion and his inheritance, or his riches and estate: he hath engraved them on the palms of his hands: their names are written in gold and precious stones upon the Redeemer's heart: a mother's love for her babe is not comparable to his love for the believer; which is a love stronger than death, and which many waters cannot quench.

quench. Therefore we might expect beforehand, that such persons so loved should not be suffered to fall away, and burn in hell for ever. The text uses this very argument for perseverance, and makes the LOVE OF GOD in Christ Jesus, the reason of our apostacy being impossible.

Add to which, that the *unchangeableness* of God is a security for our being preserved in the divine regards, who once were interested in them.

How horrible a supposition, that God can be *mutable*; whose *fickleness* must be worse than man's can ever be, because God knoweth, what man doth not, all possible events and contingencies, *the end from the beginning*. But we read, *the gifts and callings of God are without repentance. His mercy endureth for ever. He hateth putting away. I, the Lord, change not, therefore the sons of Jacob are not consumed. Every good and perfect gift cometh down from above, from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Of his own will begat he us, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures.* A believer, therefore, now, shall remain so for ever.

Instances indeed do occur, where upon persons failing of repentance or righteousness, they are rejected: but it is specially engaged by the Almighty in the covenant of grace, that the true believers shall not fail of repentance or righteousness; that the divine fear, and a true
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love

love of his laws, shall be in them, that they may not depart wholly from God—in which case there is *no room* for a change in the divine mind or conduct towards them. It is not any plant which the heavenly father *hath* planted, but every one which he *hath not* planted, which *shall be rooted up*. These he plucks up, but to those he promises in the new covenant, that he assuredly will *plant* them in heaven, *with his whole heart, and with his whole soul*.

But how can I omit the main stress of the argument in the text for perseverance, namely, that *nothing shall be able to separate us from*, not merely *the love of God*, that had been enough (as above shewn) but *the love of God which is in Christ Jesus*. That love which anxiously studies and tenderly affects them, as *persons* joined with Christ, and making *part* of his mystical *body*, who were represented by him in all his sufferings and death; for whom all his righteous behavior and character was *vicarious*: and whose eternal glorification or damnation being suspended on *his* obedience or disobedience; as it had been on that of the *first Adam*, their eternal *glorification* is, by the event of *his obedience*, immediately and for ever secured. The love of God, therefore, viewing any one as thus intimately related to Jesus Christ, and personated, suffered, and merited for, by him, must both be *too attached* to such an one, to suffer his falling away, and *if not so attached*, is *in justice not at liberty to suffer such falling away*. For every thing required to be done,

to deserve both their perseverance and heaven, having been already done by the Savior on *their* part, it only remains for the Almighty to perform *his* part, namely, *to be their God*, with all his attributes and self, in time and through all eternity. Plainly thus *nothing can be able to separate the believer from the love of God which is IN CHRIST JESUS.*

Now let us walk round about Sion, and tell the towers thereof. Mark well her bulwarks: how salvation itself is appointed for walls and for bulwarks. Our habitation is the munition of rocks, against which the gates of hell shall not prevail. Nay, all the universe of persons, creatures, and events, both present and future, shall in no degree whatever be able to undermine the absolute safety of the least believer in Christ. The only thing which *could effectually* hinder it, *sin*, is both pardoned in him and subdued. Neither can the certainty of heaven to him, and the impossibility of his falling away, be expressed by any words whatever more strongly, than by those which we have seen employed for that purpose; except it be by a bold *prolepsis*, which represents him as being *already in heaven*. For it is not only said, *he that believeth hath everlasting life, and is passed from death unto life*; and that Christ, *as a forerunner, is for us entered into heaven*, claiming the world of glory as now our inheritance and right; but we are said to be first *crucified*, then *raised up from the dead*, when Christ our head died and rose again; and afterwards, TO SIT

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TOGETHER IN HEAVENLY PLACES IN *Christ Jesus.*

To sum up all, I shall first briefly recapitulate the arguments here urged, and then suggest one or two short hints of improvement.

First, the *text*, with great amplification, asserts the perseverance of believers: which perseverance is explained to be not one *in sin* but *in holiness*, and the persons entitled to the promise of such perseverance, it was shewn, might be *trusted for not abusing it*. Next the necessity that there *should be such a doctrine in religion*, was argued *a priori*. Then, that this doctrine was a *peculiar, distinguishing and essential point of difference* of the new covenant from the old. Afterwards, that the Scripture lays down *two rules*, the one *negative*, accounting for the apostacy of all who fall away; that *they never were really of us*: the other *positive*, asserting, that *the foundation of God standeth sure*; both which rules are illustrated by our Lord's own declarations, that they who have *the honest and good heart of true grace fail not*, and that they *who endure but for a while have no root in themselves*. These arguments are supported by another, that in several respects it is of the very nature of grace to persevere, as much as it is of the nature of the *flesh to fall away*: and what *might* have been added, that it is far more rational to suppose a man to begin to build a costly edifice, and wantonly desist in the midst of the work, than that the Almighty should not finish, where he begins a spiritual building, and com-

plete in glory, what he hath begun in grace.— We have also seen *abundance* of places, in which the Almighty makes our perseverance to be not *our* task, but *his*—*his* especial province and care—agreeably to which was found to be *the tenor of the covenant of grace as delivered to David*. All the greatest men, in either Testament, have appeared to be only so many monuments of perseverance—neither do any instances of a contrary nature occur there. Besides all which, *the intercession of Christ* is set up to maintain *this lot of the righteous*. The ground of that intercession, namely, the love of God to those for whom that intercession is employed, is *another argument* for their perseverance; so is the *unchangeableness of God*. But above all, the argument in the text, namely, the *union of believers with Christ*, or the love of God to them considered as *one with him*; where they are no longer dealt with according to themselves, but wholly according to the unspeakable merits of Christ, their head and representative, is a security infallible for the perseverance of saints. Wherefore, accordingly, to crown the whole, the saints are described as being *already arrived at, and seated in heaven*.

Shall one, who is in heaven, be turned out of it?

Or shall a brand, that hath been plucked from the burning, be cast into it again?

Secondly and lastly, how *constant* a being, and *superior to all our affronts*, independent and *self-moved*, does this doctrine represent the Deity
to

to be: and how *divinely great* his *unchangeable* love. What a *glorious system* do we thus enter into, the moment we commence truly religious. Surely this earth is then *none other, than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven*. Here piety looks like the sphere of peace, hope, and happiness: to the confusion of the infidel, the allurements of the profane, the support of the drooping, and the strongest possible consolation of all true believers. Here *Satan* is *impotent*, *God* *omnipotent*, and *salvation* not made the *sport of fortune*, but *immoveable* and *effectual*. Who that lies in *sloth*, but must be roused to *activity*; in *sin* and *backsliding*, but must be filled with *ingenuous shame*, and *liberal penitence*, by the consideration, that though *we are base* to God, he will yet be *good to us*: and will not, by our *crimes themselves*, be alienated from the love he bears us, but is still determined on bringing us to heaven; and will never turn away from doing us good, but will *assuredly plant us in the land with his whole heart and with his whole soul*? Though *faint*, who would not *pursue*, when he is sure to *overtake*? Though failing in some *skirmishes*, who would not renew the battle, when certified that *he* is the person *decreed to conquer*? Thus *sin defeats itself*; and the reflection on our *ingratitude itself*, and *remaining indevotedness*, tends to produce *gratitude* the most *adoring*, and *devotedness* the most *entire*.

Let the church then glory in the assurance, that *neither death nor life, nor angels, nor prin-*
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cipalities,

cipalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Now unto him that is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy; to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen!

END OF THE EIGHTEENTH SERMON.

O F B A P T I S M.

S E R M O N X I X .

MATTHEW xxviii. 19.

Go ye and teach all Nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

TH E S E words contain the first grand authority for Christian Baptism: and they either express or imply who are the proper subjects, what the mode, and what the uses of that ordinance are.

First, men are to be instructed in christianity, if ignorant of it. *Go ye and teach.* Then, and not before, for self-evident reasons, adults are to be baptized. *Teach all nations, baptizing them:* by which act they are manifestly meant to be separated from the world *not* professing the religion of Jesus, and included among those who *profess* that religion;

religion ; as the apostle says, *baptized into one body.*

But, because by baptism men are received into the society of christians, as by circumcision they formerly were into the *common wealth of Israel*, Baptism, as an admissory rite into the visible church of God, must answer to circumcision.

And, because when any aliens from the common wealth of Israel were *pricked to the heart, repented, believed*, they were not only circumcised themselves, but permitted and commanded to circumcise their *offspring*, therefore, baptism answering to circumcision, when any heathens, strangers to the covenant of promise, are *convinced of sin, of righteousness and judgement*, they are not only to be baptized themselves, but their offspring with them. And thenceforward baptism is to be administered, as circumcision was, to infants.

For this reason, every precept to baptize *believers*, is a precept to baptize their *infants*: one being immediately implied in the other.

Most vain, therefore, is the *opposition* of believers baptism to that of infants ; for they interfere not, but contain one the other. *Repent and be baptized, for the remission of sins ; believe and be baptized, and thou shalt be saved* ; were directed to, and can only concern adults : who *involve* infants, not exclude them : and which infants cannot by these precepts be excluded from *baptism*, without being equally excluded from *remission of sins and salvation*. What can be plainer ? Where-

Wherefore we read, that the children of one or more believing parents are by the apostle called *holy*: that is (no one supposes, *really holy* but) amongst the number of those entitled to the privilege of *separation* from the infidel world, and *appropriation* to God as part of his visible church and people: which *separation for*, and *appropriation to*, God, is the precise meaning of the word *holy* in Scripture.

And on the same account we find, that believers, upon being baptized themselves, had the privilege of *their households* being baptized too. This and the other person was baptized, *and all his straightway*. It is presumed that at least in *some* of their houses there certainly were infants, who are indisputably part of a man's *household or family*, and *his* in a most eminent sense. But *if not*, had there been any, by the analogy of circumcision, they would have had right to baptism.

Thus the precept in the text first commands the conversion, afterwards the baptism of adults; and then the baptism *of course* of their children. For what Barbarian, Scythian, Jew, upon being brought over to the christian faith, would wish his children to remain under even the name of a profession of his old Pagan religion? And how can we even suppose the Almighty to refuse parents the comfort of enrolling their children among professors of his name and worship in the visible church; when all beyond is not only alienation, but *professed* alienation from him. Certainly this privilege
was

was granted to believing parents *aforetime*, though their children remained unconscious of the transaction. Why not now? And it was granted to them in *the christian church itself* aforetime. For Christ alone was the *head and hope* of the *Jewish church*, as much as of that now called *christian*. It is the same *old olive stock*, only the old branches are now cut off, and we new ones grafted in *. It hath ever been, from the foundation of the world, a one continuous *church of Christ*. Shall infants, therefore, be admitted at one time into the christian church, ever since it hath been one, and not *now*?

Objections are made against the propriety of churchship being annexed to *infants without understanding*: as such they are said to be *incapable* of baptism. But every objection that can possibly be made against the baptism of infants on *this* ground, standing out in equal force against the *acknowledged* divine rite of *circumcising* infants, is of no force.

But it may be proper to shew more fully, that baptism does *answer to circumcision*; and that *infants* are perfectly *as capable* of baptism as *adults*: and *need* it as much as adults, and as much now as ever. As also, that there *ought to be no precept literal and distinct* for *infant baptism*. And that *Jesus Christ himself*, though baptized adult, was a *precedent* for in-

* They did all eat the same spiritual meat, and all drank the same spiritual drink, with us: for they drank (says St. Paul) of the rock Christ.

fant baptism, and John the baptist the administrator of no other.

First then, baptism appears to answer to circumcision, not only because they are each the *initiating* forms of a visible church of God, and of the *same* church, though at different times; but because they each are *signs* and *tokens* of the *same thing*; namely, of the covenant to save sinners by the righteousness of faith. That baptism into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, is a sign and token of the same covenant, to save sinners by the righteousness of faith, is self-evident; else, there is no meaning in these covenant names of the trinity employed in baptism. Neither doth christianity, into which men are baptized, consist of *any thing else but such a covenant*. The very idea of the Deity's putting a man into a community professing to hope in such a covenant, and that by a rite of his own appointment, implies, that upon the plan of such a covenant, he engages and binds himself to save such a man. Baptism is in its own nature a seal set to an indenture or covenant to save sinners by the righteousness of faith. But St. Paul, in so many words says, *circumcision was a seal of the righteousness of faith*. Which indeed its own nature speaks it to be; since it was a divinely appointed act to incorporate men into a body professing only (what was represented in all its types and ceremonies, tabernacle and temple) the *righteousness of faith*. There is *no difference* then between baptism and
circumcision,

circumcision, but each insoft members into a church, and into the same church, and each attest and ratify the same thing.

They correspond also to each other, because they *typify* the same thing; namely *sanctification*. For *circumcision of the heart*, and *washing of regeneration* are perfectly identical. The flesh is cut off in circumcision, washed clean in baptism—and not only so, but the placing sanctification before us typically in both baptism and circumcision, *both one and the same use*. For, whether we consider it thus, that upon our becoming related to God as his visible people, it is our duty of course to remember, *be ye holy, for I am holy*; or thus, that upon our apprehending the righteousness of faith, *God engages* to circumcise our hearts to love and to serve him, it behoves us to rejoice, that sanctification is exhibited to us as a privilege and essential part of the covenant of grace: either way is sanctification with equal wisdom held up to us, in both baptism and circumcision. Each ordinance requires the same ideas concerning *justification by faith*; concerning the necessity of sanctification, notwithstanding such justification; and concerning the *divine engagement* to provide us with both of them. Each ordinance presents us with these the self-same ideas.

Does the Almighty pledge himself to the baptized (upon their being either then or thereafter actually what their baptism represents, namely, *holy believers*) to be their covenant God;
their

their Father, Savior and Holy Spirit? this is precisely the same promise as was made at circumcision, *I will be their God.* Here then baptism and circumcision still appear to be *homogeneous*, as it were, and successive one of the other. Which appearance is the more confirmed and realized, because (as appears by the admonition given to the Jews on coming to *baptism*, just as though it had been *circumcision*) the *same temptation* attends one as the other: a consequent disposition to value one's self upon being part of the visible church and people of God. *Think not*, says John, *to say to yourselves we have Abraham to our father*, at the moment of their submitting to christian baptism.

Also Christ, the *institutor* of *baptism*, is called *the minister of circumcision*, (though he only founded *baptism* in his church) and that *to confirm the promises made unto the Fathers.*

And, to mention no more, as every *uncircumcised* person was considered as an heathen, in the very self-same light are all the *unbaptized* nations considered as heathenish too. Therefore, because the *office* of circumcision and baptism is the same; and because the *church*, of which they are admisory rites, (though one bloody, the other easy) are the *same*; and because they are both *seals* of the *same covenant*, that of justification by faith; and because the *antitype* of both is *one and the same thing*, namely *sanctification*; and that with respect to both the privilege and duty of man,

and

and the promise of God in the same covenant; and because *the relation* commenced between God and man upon the completion of baptism and circumcision on the part of man, is the *same*; and because the *temptation* or evil attending both is the *same*; and lastly, because our *state*, or profession, *upon being destitute of either*, is the *same*, it follows, that *baptism is the christian circumcision*.

And this conclusion is corroborated by the form of the origin of baptism, as a *christian initiation*. For the only baptism for initiation formerly, was the *Profelyte* baptism; and it was always accompanied with *circumcision*; therefore when our Lord rejected the circumcision-part of initiation, and adopted its companion, baptism, such adopting was plainly an absorption of circumcision into baptism. So that baptism must irrefragably be the christian circumcision.

Let any uninterested person read the epistles to the Galatians and Colossians, addressed to Judaizing teachers who wished to retain circumcision, and it will most clearly appear, that the answer made in this case is, that baptism is the christian circumcision in Galatians, and *spiritual circumcision*, the *spiritual baptism*, in Colossians.

Certain it is, all the Fathers called baptism the christian circumcision; and that women are baptized, who could not be circumcised, only shews the extension and enlargement of the ordinance upon Christ's real appearance. As it

is written, *there is neither Jew nor Gentile, bond nor free, male nor female* in Christ.

That the mere description of the people among whom Christ should be born, was not the object of circumcision, is plain from the express declaration, that circumcision is *a seal of the righteousness of faith*; which is a general thing, and unconfined.

That Abraham's natural offspring *only* were admitted into the church by circumcision, but that now his spiritual, that is, believers every where throughout the world, are admitted into the church by baptism, only proves that the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile is taken down, and the Gospel-building as it were enlarged. Though yet (perhaps to intimate before-hand such enlargement) *profelytes of justice*, not being Abraham's natural offspring, only his spiritual, were received into the church, and entitled to all its privileges, as well as natural-born Jews. A consideration, which not only takes off part of the objections made to the correspondence of baptism to circumcision, but will be of use in the conclusion I draw from that correspondence, namely, that *infants* are to be *baptized*, because *infants were circumcised*. For if profelytes, not of Abraham's *natural* family, only of his *spiritual*, were both permitted to be circumcised themselves, and to have their infants also circumcised, it follows, that believers now, the spiritual seed of Abraham, have both right to baptism for themselves, and in virtue thereof for their infants.

Should

Should infants be excluded from baptism, if plainly *capable* of it? Now they not only are to the full as capable of baptism, as heretofore of circumcision, but from the spirit and nature of baptism are *as capable of it* as *adults* are. For if God covenants to save sinners by the righteousness of faith, and baptism, as a seal of that covenant, affirms, concerning the individual who receives it, that hereby God Almighty binds himself to save such person upon his having faith, such a seal may be applied to an infant full as well as to an adult. Just as an annuity or estate of any kind may be settled on an infant, and sealed and delivered for that purpose, upon certain conditions, such as paying a certain quit rent, or residing so many months in a particular family-house, or what not; such a covenant temporal may be, and is continually, made with infants, their unconsciousness of it notwithstanding. Ratification on the infant's part when come to age, makes the covenant and seal rational and complete. Neither is there the least absurdity in such a covenant or its appendant seal, even upon the supposition, that the infant, when come to age, *will not perform* the condition stipulated for from him. This indeed vacates the benefits made over to him under that condition, but does not make the covenant itself, or its seal, improper, nor infants incapable of such conditional overtures, or of the seals of them, any more than adults. And thus because the covenant in baptism to account us

righteous

righteous by faith alone, is sealed and assured to the receiver, upon the condition, that, if adult, he now has faith, or if an infant, hereafter should have it, infants are as capable of such a covenant and its seal as adults. And if infants never have faith, their baptism is yet proper. God hath thus, unasked on their part, made them a promise of salvation on the plan and method of faith; and if they never have faith, the misfortune and the fault lies, not upon the making such a promise, with solemn assurance of completion, represented by a seal, but upon themselves.

In one word, to the baptized the Almighty says, upon this person's being now or hereafter a *believer from the heart unto righteousness*, I promise him, though a sinner, salvation; and put this mark upon him, as a seal and ratification thereof. Infants may receive such a seal of the righteousness of faith, that is, baptism, full as well as adults.

But what is more, infants *need* baptism as well as adults. The very idea of finding one's self, as soon as reason opens our eyes, covenanted with for eternal happiness by the Almighty, and such covenant tendered to us individually, and every thing done and provided herein on the part of the Almighty, and nothing being left for either of us to do, but as each a lost sinner to believe on the Savior; the very idea of such a merciful stipulation, but much more considered as made to me *unasked*, hath an immediate tendency to pre-occupy the human

mind in favour, of religion, and to *beget* that faith, which is all the condition on man's part for the obtaining eternal happiness. Such an act is needful, if, in our present corrupt state, whatever has the *least* tendency to call us to God is needful and highly precious.

Bold as it is to venture wholly on the merits of *another* for salvation, to the exclusion of our own, (which is God's appointed method,) if the being able, upon believing on those merits of another, to look back to our earliest infant baptism, and there to observe a seal or sign administered to us of certain salvation in this method, be needful, and highly supporting to our faith, such infant baptism is needful and most valuable.

If the religious education of children be a duty incumbent on parents and guardians, and greatly needful, this ordinance, which by its very idea obliges parents and guardians to educate children religiously, is needful and of great moment.

If early piety be needful, this rite, in which persons pledge themselves solemnly to the church, that, if we are admitted its visible members, we shall be considered as under high obligation to be righteous, and to flee from sin, is of the last importance.

If Christendom, or the region in which God's holy word is preserved, and profession of the worship of Jesus maintained and propagated, the sphere of conversions, and seat of the means of grace, be most invaluable to the world,

world, as Jewry was of old; to which was then *committed*, in a similar manner as now to us, the *oracles of God*; and if either of them have been in a great measure kept up by the baptism or circumcision of infants, then it is needful for infants to be baptized *.

It is needful also in respect of *parents*, who though they might safely trust in God's favour to save infants unconsciously, who had original sin derived to them unconsciously; yet, as the more certainty on this point, the happier they are; so can they no way have *greater* certainty than by the *baptism* of infants. For as baptism expresses a covenant to save sinners, through Christ, upon believing; and seals that covenant to them; so, where the subject dies without a natural capacity of believing, and is by that means naturally, not morally, unable to perform *his* part; an obligation, which God in baptism voluntarily puts himself under, seems to remain on *him* to save such a subject, as much as if he had performed his part. Because such an one had all *scope* and *natural power* of performing his part of the covenant taken away from him by God himself, he cannot plainly be dealt with, as though such opportunity and ability had been afforded him and abused.

And now, in infant-baptism, the Almighty himself has room and opportunity to seal to

* If the children of baptists in some respects enjoy the same privileges with those of the regularly christianized, it is by *usurpation*, through living amongst those who are regularly christianized.

infants *born in sin*, a dispensation of mercy as *soon as* born: where, as their sin and misery were drawn from only plucking a forbidden fruit, so redemption and sanctification are made as cheap to them, upon only taking of the tree of life by faith.

If the merely being God's visible people was a proper argument for prophets and others to use, in supplicating God's temporal mercies and protections for the Jews; and if on this very account, the worst of men, because Jews, reaped many extraordinary deliverances and blessings: and if, on this very principle, infants were, on great occasions, presented before God as part of his household, by Moses, Jehoshaphat, Ezra, and others; then infants, as well as others, need baptism, or an incorporation into the outward church of God: where doubtless now, as well as heretofore, numberless peculiar favours are vouchsafed to not only the unconscious, but the bad, for the sake of the good in that community. The Egyptian's house is blessed for Joseph's sake.

So sensible are the baptists themselves of the benefits of infant baptism, that they endeavour to steal, by *dedicating* their children to God, the virtuality of a *baptismal* dedication to him.

Much more might be added here, but suffice it to say, that all the both spiritual and temporal advantages flowing from the circumcision, must of course flow from the baptism, of infants; and greater ones than those, in the proportion of the greater light and privileges under

under the gospel, than under the law. Thus if baptism be needful for adults, it appears also to be needful for infants, and that in a very high degree, not to say far more than for adults: to whom, if christianized before, an after-baptism in mature age may be extremely pernicious, in a way wholly impossible to *infant baptism*: such adult baptism being but too easily, and I fear too frequently, taken for a *positive proof of a man's conversion to God*, and so made eventually, by sealing their delusion, a seal of their *destruction*.

Thus it appears, that there is as great a need as ever, if not a greater, for incorporating infants into the church as its visible, and multitudes of them eventually its real and spiritual members.

For their churchship to be abrogated, however, it ought to be, what it is not, wholly useless, and unprecedented, in every possible point of view.

But it is pretended, that if infant baptism be a right one, there ought to be some warrant or precept for it. Now I contend that it would be very wrong and improper for any such warrant or precept to be delivered on this point: that there could be no kind of use or occasion for a command here: no regulation to be produced, no alteration to be made, no one to be informed or instructed by it: no one could have imagined any occasion for it, but it must have confounded and perplexed men's minds, instead of directing them. For where, for near two

thousand years, from the very foundation of a church, without interruption, infants had been wont to be received into that church as its members; and where the advantages of it had all that time been enjoying; and where the circumstances of its first institution made it *necessary to be perpetual*; * and where such in churching of infants was both of God's own appointment, and commanded under the most fearful penalties; there it would be every way un-supposeable that it should be abolished: its continuance must naturally be looked upon as eternal.

But least of all, upon merely *changing the form* of such admission, from that of shedding blood, to a milder one that of sprinkling pure water on the subject; and that at a time of extending and improving church privileges, could it be surmised by any one, that now *infants were henceforward no more for ever to be regarded as part of the church*? No such thought could have entered any one's mind. The reason of the thing still subsisted as before; and the privilege by immemorial *custom* and divine command having now long been *inwrought* into the religion of Christ (for such the Jewish was in essence) the human mind could

* For till God begun by circumcision to separate the church to himself as a repository of truth, truth seems to have almost perished out of the earth, and was retained, as in Noah's time, almost wholly in one family, and there very much obscured and corrupted; idols, as well as the true God, being jointly worshipped among Abraham's own relations.

not be capable of conceiving, that, upon Christ's own appearance, such privilege would be struck off. Upon announcing that now men were to be admitted into his church by baptism, as hitherto by circumcision, *infants* would be brought *of course* to baptism, as hitherto by circumcision. Thus, because a precept for the peculiar baptism of infants would be unnecessary, a thing never to have been thought of at the time, there *ought* to have been no such precept; and because it was certain that baptism came in the room of circumcision, and therefore essentially implied the baptism of infants, any precept literal and peculiar for the baptism of infants, must be strange and surprizing. The need for such a specification of infants would look as if baptism did not answer to circumcision; while yet its being, like circumcision, the *line of circumvallation*, as it were, between the visible church and heathens, would make it appear the christian circumcision.

All this strain of arguing is amply confirmed by the example of our blessed Saviour himself: who, while as a Jew, of course, he received circumcision in infancy, but in infancy could not change it for baptism, or appoint himself then to be baptized, did, immediately upon coming to maturity, and beginning to establish christianity with improvements, himself submit to the *profelyte* baptism; which, it is well known, admitted infants as well as adults. That famous Rabbi, Ben Maimon, author of a comment in purest Hebrew, upon the whole

Talmud, says, that *it is as well known as that the sun is up at noon day, that infants were admitt d to profelyte baptism in right of their parents.*

So that here we have John the Baptist himself administring, and our Lord Jesus Christ himself, though adult, countenancing and actually receiving infant baptism: that is, a baptism which admitted infants: nay, there was no other then in being.

On which account alone, without any other argument whatever, and without considering the analogy of circumcision at all, as soon as the precept was delivered, *baptize*, such command being made intelligible by the baptism already in use which admitted infants, no room was left for a precept specifying infants. There ought not to have been one, nothing could have required it. It would have been a waste precept, wholly superfluous, abrupt, and confounding.

On the other hand, infants through all ages back having been in the church, and in Christ's church, through circumcision; and being not only continued in such privilege by the answering of baptism to circumcision, but by their usual participation of baptism as administered to profelytes, and now set up in the church universally, it must be very extraordinary and unaccountable, if, all on a sudden, though the baptism set up, and the circumcision which it superceded, both admitted infants, men were of their own accord to *sup-*
pose

pose and *think* that infants were no longer to be retained in the church; and this without any kind of precept or law for such discontinuance and rejection of infants, or alteration of the baptism already in use. Such an alteration is strangely required to be believed, without any precept, by those persons who, objecting to infant baptism, insist loudly on the necessity for precepts.

No man can pretend to common sense, who does not own, that there ought to be a positive and strict precept for this alteration in baptism, of ejecting infants, who had been heretofore always received in *baptism*, as well as circumcision; and that it must be at any one's peril, without such precept, to *presume* on such a cutting off of infants from the church.

Thus, if infant baptism be right, there ought to be no precept for it; but if infant baptism be wrong, there ought to be a strong literal and irresistible precept against it. Let the shadow of such a precept be shewn, and the cause shall be given up.

Suppose some great city to have had very ancient rights and franchises granted by royal charter or act of parliament; and suppose no act done to revoke or annul them; they are plainly continued. Without a particular and formal declaration that those rights and franchises are taken away, it is not in our power, if we would, to *suppose* them taken away. It is incumbent therefore on the baptists, to produce a clear and full *prohibition* of the inchurch-
ing

ing of infants; such inchurching of them having been remotely the right and franchise of the Christian church: otherwise we may not *fancy* such a prohibition. To call upon us to *suppose* infants dismembered from the church, and by Christ, while Scripture is totally silent on the subject, is too much.

But have we not a fine *type*, shall I call it, or *precedent*, for the baptism of infants, in the baptism of the children of Israel to Moses in the cloud and in the sea? For there, unless the mothers left their infants behind in Egypt, those infants were baptized as well as their mothers.

And this argument holds equally good, if we suppose, that the expression *baptized unto Moses*, means only *represented the church under Christ*, our spiritual deliverer: for then it follows, that infants are a part of that baptized body the church of Christ.

To me indeed there seems, besides all this demonstration for the baptism of infants, to be a plain intimation of it, notwithstanding what some great men say to the contrary, in that text of St. Paul, *leaving the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands*. Where, if laying on of hands means *Confirmation*, and surely this is by far the most natural sense of the passage, infant baptism is immediately inferable from it *. But

* The context is usually the best interpreter of a text. Let any one see how ridiculous any other interpretation of *χειροτονια* is in the connexion of this place. *All the Fathers with one consent* so understood the verse. The interpretation of some learned men is, that it means *lifting up the hands in giving votes*, which cannot, without great absurdity, be called, as *χειροτονια* is, a *doctrine*.

But it is pleasing in this argument to find, that as infants were in the church before Christ came, they have been retained in it ever since, and that *through all Christendom*. By which name I design all those countries (however corrupt some of them) where baptism is administered in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. Now if there was any evidence that infants were not to be baptized, it is very extraordinary that all Christendom, all our own churches of all the different parties, episcopal, and independent, and those governed by elders; together with all the different sects not falling under these names; all the foreign churches, the Greek, the Latin, and the reformed ones, every where throughout the world, have not been able to discover it. It is very extraordinary, if all these are no churches, or have only one sacrament amongst them, and are all unbaptized, as they must be, if infant baptism be phantastical and not the true. It is very extraordinary, if the venerable modern and ancient reformers, the great instruments of conversions among us, martyrs and venerable bishops, with all Christendom, now and in all ages back, were never baptized. And however the argument, that truth rests not upon majorities, be in general of great weight, yet is it notwithstanding very extraordinary, if the great head of the church hath taken so little care to set up his very sacraments in that church, as to leave it almost every where without any more than one of his sacraments;

craments; maimed and defective in so important a part of a church; and to contrive, that only an handful of very inconsiderable men, who are a vanishing point almost compared with all that name the name of Christ, should be alone in possession of *both* the sacraments; which must be the case if infant baptism be false.

Neither may it be omitted here, that the great oracles of christian antiquities, acknowledged by the baptists themselves, and by all, to be the first in their line of study; men that have been the veneration of all countries now for many years, are clear, positive, and abundant in asserting, that, from the present day, back through all ages to the apostolic, evidence irresistible is found, that baptism hath been, in one unbroken succession, administered to infants. And *antiquarians*, who lived but two or three centuries after the apostolic age, and therefore had infallible ground for their opinion, particularly *St. Augustin*, who lived in the fourth century, are full in declaring, that *this the universal church; without all doubt, derived from our Lord and the apostles, that children should be baptized. This the church always held, always maintained.* And what this father says elsewhere concerning *tradition*, is very observable: *that what was ever in the church, and was not ordained first by any bishop or council, and for the origin of which no trace of any human appointment can be found, is an apostolic tradition.*

Now as a man of integrity and study, living in this present year of Christ, is a far more competent

competent witness of what was the practice of this country and of Christendom in general, respecting the baptism of infants in the reign of Henry the VIIth or Henry the VIIIth (which interval nearly equals the time from the death of St. John to the birth of St. Augustin) than any person who is to live twelve or fourteen hundred years hence can possibly be, the testimony of St. Augustin in favour of the then notorious and universally allowed use of infant baptism in the church, from the very times of the apostles, ought in comparison with all modern antiquarians, to be infinitely preferable, and final.

St. Chrysostom, Gregory Nazianzen, Optatus, and others in the fourth century; Origen in the third; Tertullian and Irenæus in the second, give each their testimonies to the baptism of infants: the last of which writers being born but two or three years after the death of St. John, is called by *Theodoret* Δαδoχος των Αποστολων, successor of the Apostles * †.

One thing however is certain, which confirms the antiquity of infant baptism *without*

* If Constantine and some others would not be baptized till sick and dying, all the world knows it was from a then new notion that sin after baptism was unpardonable.

† The pretence either that the *Waldenses* were from the apostles time, or denied baptism to infants, implies, I hope, more ignorance than wilfulness in its assertors. For there is the fullest historical evidence that the *Waldenses* in general always allowed infants baptism: and the mistake here suggested probably arose from the confusion of them with the *Cathari*, relicks of *Munichæans*, settled in those places whence the *Waldenses* sprang; and from the expression of the Papists and Inquisitors concerning all who denied the *salvation* of infants by, not Christ, but mere baptism, that such *denied baptism*.

any

any of these authorities; and that is, that baptism was uniformly called by all the fathers, and particularly by Justin Martyr, who was converted not twenty years after the death of St. John, *CIRCUMCISION*, περιτομή, σφραγίς, σημεῖον.

And now we see, as (what was before proved) any literal precept for infant baptism, would have been improper in the apostolic times, so none hath been needed ever since. The analogy of circumcision, which admitted infants: the nature of the only *human* baptism in use, at least for *initiation*, if not for every kind of purification, when our Lord said baptize; that baptism admitting infants: the precedent of our Lord Jesus himself receiving this very baptism from John: the striking proof he gave of his not designing to deprive little children of any privilege, by the peculiar manner of his charging them to be brought to him, as in circumcision they had been before: the total silence of Scripture about such abolition of their privilege: the un-supposeableness of such a deprivation, from the enlargement not abridgement of privileges under the Gospel: the *capacity* in infants of baptism equally with adults, and their equal need of baptism: and their needing it now as much as ever: the pattern of infant baptism, and churchship, under Moses: the precedents for it when believers *households* and *all theirs* were baptized: (infants being certainly theirs and a part of the family) but principally the consideration, that in the baptism adopted by our Lord himself,
 infants

infants were invariably received: 'all these things plainly so of course, and obviously, and irresistibly taught the primitive church, as to leave no place for a precept, either then or afterwards. And the matter of fact is, that through all Christendom, in all ages, the church hath been sufficiently guided and supported in this point, without any distinct precept specifying infants: consequently, *universal matter of fact* teacheth, that any such precept had been nugatory and vain *.

Something, however, remains to be spoken concerning the MODE of baptism; which is of very little consequence; *unto what are ye baptized*, being the main thing: whether into the profession of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, or into any other faith. In comparison with this, not only the quantity of water, but even water itself, is plainly of very inferior moment.

'The only modes contended for are, immersion, by one party, and sprinkling or pouring water, by the other. If immersion therefore be disproved, I shall take it for granted, that sprinkling or pouring is right. But let me

* Some make the additions made to baptism, as the sign of the cross, and godfathers, &c. and the intemperance often used at christenings, so many arguments against the probability that infant christening should be baptism. Suppose now, both the priest and the parent, under the law, had in the festivity on this occasion been ever so wicked and intemperate, and annexed ceremonies of their own, this had not made the child's circumcision to be uncircumcision; nor affected its validity in the least degree whatever. The corruption be to the corruptors, if any, and not to either the infant or the ordinance.

premise,

premise, that even supposing immersion to have been the original form, no doubt can be made, but that where the climate, or extreme old age, or sickly infancy, or any other cause, created great inconvenience and danger, *or apprehension of danger*, there it might and ought to be dispensed with: as it is written, *I will have mercy and not sacrifice*. It is great weakness therefore in the baptists to insist on immersion, as the indispensable mode of baptism, supposing, what is very far from being true, that immersion is the original mode.

Was then DIPPING the apostolic practice? Certainly not. For first, the baptism of every one mentioned in Scripture MIGHT have been performed another way. Secondly, it is contrary to the highest degree of moral certainty, that *in any instance* it *was* performed this way. Thirdly, many instances occur, in which it was *impossible* to be performed this way. Though, if *only one* instance can be found, in which it is *positively certain* baptism was not administered by dipping by the apostles, it will follow, that dipping was not their practice, and is not the right mode of baptism. For could we see *one print*, undoubtedly authentic and exact, of the manner of any one apostolic baptism, I apprehend this would satisfy all parties.

First then, though such as were baptized in rivers, are said *to go down into the water*, and *to come up out of it*, yet might they not have been immersed in the water, but only have

have gone into it *anckle deep*, and there have had water sprinkled upon them in the name of the Trinity. A supposition the more likely to be true, inasmuch as *washing the feet* was necessary and customary in the east. So that there is no occasion *hence* to conclude that these baptized were immersed. And though there being *much water in a place*, is mentioned as a reason for baptizing there, yet might this respect the *multitude to be baptized*: from the nature of the country, *much water* may not be opposed to *little water* but to *none at all*. Water being *scarce* in many of those parts, and baptism not administrable without it, it might both be administered, where there was plenty of water, and also to great numbers at once; with divers other conveniences: so that there being *much water* at no rate need imply immersion.

But if *πολλα υδατα* signify *many waters*, which is the exact translation; or *many little brooks*; then that expression by no means implies immersion, but directly the contrary.

Secondly, it is greatly improbable that baptism in *any instance* was ever performed by immersion: improbable in the highest degree, that *thousands of both men and women should either undress and be dipped, or be dipped with their clothes on*, being wet through and all over, and in this manner sent to their respective homes; some of them even riding in their carriages in this condition. It is improbable, in the highest degree, that

Peter should baptize in this very laborious way, by steeping under water all the weight of thousands of people at one time. Shall we here, to avoid plain truth, fancy any thing in support of a notion pre-conceived, and without any warrant from Scripture, call in the seventy to Peter's help? Surely all the seventy must have been mighty conveniently present: but with all their assistance, of Peter and each other, not a little toil must still have fallen to the share of each of them.

These helps, however, happen not to have existed to assist John, when (insuperable work, if immersion were the mode he practised) there went out to him all *Jerusalem, and all Judæa, and all the region round about Jordan*, for baptism. Is it likely that all these were, with all their cloaths, wet through, by being plunged wholly in the water? And is it not far less likely, that they went naked into the water? Is it not much more natural to suppose that they were put to no inconvenience of either of these kinds, but came just into the water to St. John, and there passing before him, were sprinkled? and the same concerning Peter? Looks not this so grave, decent, and easy, far more like a *christian* ordinance than the other? Is it not beyond all human probability, that the baptized, as many were, *in houses*, and some *in prison*, should have been *immersed*? What convenience for this can we suppose there was either at a jail, or at Cornelius's house?

No

No better proof of a bad cause can be given, than the baptists defence of their's respecting these pretended immersions: namely, that there might be *tents* in which they undressed and dressed: or that perhaps they went to the porches of Bethesda; or there might be reservoirs of water in the jail, into which Paul and Silas with their sore backs, and the jailer together, and at midnight, descended: with many other similar things—to which the best answer is *silence*. They themselves cannot believe their own explanations—at least not these so far fetched and totally improbable.

Doth not the *pouring out*, or *shedding forth*, called the *baptism* of the Holy Ghost, represented as it was by an effusion of *flame* in the form of a *tongue*, upon the heads of the apostles, best explain its correspondent expression, *I baptize you with water*; and shew the mode of such baptism to have been by affusion or insperision on the *forehead*? That baptism by *fire*, is a picture of baptism by *water*. Let any one judge.

But, thirdly, it was *impossible*, that where the scene of the baptism of the three thousand is laid in Acts ii. those persons should have been *plunged*—there being no river there in which *they could be plunged* *. However the baptism of Saul, afterwards Paul, was *infallibly* not performed by plunging: for when baptized he was by far *too faint and ill* to be immersed, having been three days without food; and

* The great *topographer*, as well as *historian*, SPANHEIM, says of this passage, *nullo ibi fluvio in quem demitterentur*.

after being baptized did not recover strength or spirits till he had *taken meat*. Besides, the text imports, that he did not go out of the *house* where he was, or even out of the room to be baptized *.

Thus then all the persons, whose baptism is recorded in Scripture, *need not* have been immersed, but might have been sprinkled: and it is improbable, in the highest degree, on many accounts, that they were immersed, but not at all improbable that they were sprinkled. And it is *infallibly certain* that *some could not* be immersed, but therefore must have been sprinkled. Therefore, beyond doubt, baptism is rightly administered without immersion by sprinkling.

Hath the *laver of regeneration* any respect to baptism? Then I ask, what human persons were *immersed* in the lavers under the law?

It seems plain, that as immersing wholly in water, which it is readily owned is the *precise primary* meaning of the Greek word *baptizo*, is an emblem of purification; so any application of water signifying *purity* came to represent purification: and thus, according to the analogy of all languages, a proper sense of *baptizo* is *any application of water*, with design to represent *purification and separation thereby to God*. Thus

* It is easy to find *some* answer which the baptists make a point of doing, though a bad one, to every objection. Hence one supposes that he might be miraculously strengthened for baptism; but if so, unfortunately the miraculous strength forsook him immediately afterwards; for it is said that *afterwards, when he had received meat* (and therefore *not before*, when he was baptized) *he was strengthened*.

we read, *I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean*; and thus *beds* or *couches* are said to be baptized, though they were certainly not *dipped* in water, only *sprinkled* with it.

Agreeably to which idea John the baptist, either by inspiration, or by his own reason, finding it impossible to baptize so great a multitude by plunging; and remembering how very rarely human immersions were practised under the law itself * (for reasons which must make it very improper for them to pass into a perpetual universal sacrament under the gospel) and considering that *sprinkling* was under the law itself a mode of purification; and knowing prophetically that sprinkling might be applied without either danger, terror, or ludicrousness, to persons of all ages, constitutions, climates, but plunging could not, appears to have adopted aspersion in his baptism. Where, notwithstanding such alteration, the *idea* being the same, of *ingression into God's visible church*; and the symbol the same, *water*; and so the *essence of baptism* the same; the *name* baptism was retained *very naturally*, though the *plunging*, the direct

* We are by no means to suppose, that where it is said in Leviticus, *bathe or wash himself in water*, *immerge* is to be understood; for the expression is used concerning the *priests*, and *the molten sea*, who nevertheless in *Chronicles* are said only to have washed their hands and feet in water. And in that kind of ceremonial uncleanness, where a *total immersion* is certainly required, there is a formal specification of such totality: *he shall wash ALL his flesh in water*; which word *all* occurs, I believe, no where else in Leviticus in a similar connection.

primary meaning of the *mere* word baptism, was abolished.

And so vanishes all the affectation about the Greek word *baptizo* *.

It is certain, without assigning reasons for John's changing plunging into sprinkling, (if indeed they were not interchangeable before,) that, from what has been shewn above, persons who could not have been immersed, but therefore were sprinkled by the apostles, are yet said to be *baptized*.

Circumcision, confessedly emblematic of the same thing as baptism, and serving to the same intent, was sufficiently typical and signatory, though not an universal but *partial* excision of the flesh: baptism therefore might confidently be expected to be not an universal, but partial wetting of the flesh.

If baptism be a seal put to our title to heaven, subjectly to the condition of our being at any time believers, how ridiculous to require, that the *seal* should be as *large* as the *man himself*? Where the title is good, can the size of the seal, be it more or less, be of any importance?

And if the *Ark*, as the baptists pretend from Peter i. 3. signified baptism, the *outward* ordinance (though the passage expressly says the contrary) the ark was not *immersed* in the water, else it had sunk; but only stood as it were ankle deep in the water, like the men baptized

* The very authors quoted by the baptists to prove the meaning of *baptizo* to *dip*, were all to a man satisfied that *secondarily* sprinkling was baptism.

in rivers and brooks ; being sprinkled as they were, or affused with water from above. But if not baptism, but the thing *signified* by it ; namely, *justification* in the conscience, *through the resurrection of Jesus Christ* ; and salvation thus by him from hell ; as the context and the reason of the thing shews, were represented by the salvation of Noah in the ark from the deluge, then, no respect being had here to the *outward ordinance*, but to the thing *signified*, there is no room for any respect to be had to the *form* of that outward ordinance, or to an alledged immersion in water, but the contrary.

In like manner, if the baptism of *the children of Israel unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea*, be urged *literally*, they were not baptized by *immersion* either in the cloud or in the sea : for then they must have stood *in the sea*, which they did not ; for it was on one side : and the cloud must have lain over them ; whereas it *went before* them when journeying. If any water touched them, it must be some few drops from the waves at their side : for we read nothing of the *cloud* shedding water ; neither is it likely that what was a pillar of a cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night, should *contain water*. The plain meaning of the place is, that here the Israelites strikingly appeared, not only as a church, a people separate unto God from the rest of the world, and saved when others are lost ; but a church in particular of *Christ*, of whom Moses as a deliverer, was in this act a

most eminent type. In this sense alone they seem to be called BAPTIZED UNTO MOSES.

And so the apostle's argument in Corinthians requires it should mean.

What a cause, which rests on *types* and *metaphors* ! For, because it is said *buried with Christ in baptism* (that is, buried to sin along with Christ by the very idea of a christian profession) therefore they conclude, that a man is not only to be buried to sin, as his baptism professes he should be, but what is more, that he ought in baptism to *act a burying*; and that *in water*: to go under water, and there be covered; and, they ought surely to add, *remain there*, else it can be no *burial*, either real or metaphorical. The burial to sin with Christ, *possessed* in baptism *completed*, and *professed* in the ceremony of *all* baptism, is a *permanent* thing.

And yet, absurd as the supposition is, that this burial with Christ in baptism respected the *outward* ordinance, instead of the *inward* grace, such was the superstitious weakness of the church of Rome, that so early as in the second century, we find sprinkling at length applied chiefly to the bedridden and dying, and dipping introduced; though not without marks of its origin, such as entire nakedness, of men, women and children, when immersed, and other rites.

In fine, if sprinkling answers the same end as immersion, the one not being an actual *putting away the filth of the flesh*, any more than the

the other *, but each equally representing under the law a purification unto God : if sprinkling is the identical expression by which purification under the gospel is foretold : if sprinkling being partial, not universal, resembles circumcision ; and hath nothing in it misbecoming a christian sacrament ; but immersion has, containing in it danger and terror : if sprinkling be easy and accommodated to earliest infancy, extreme old age, weak spirits, and all climates as well as persons, *without any inconvenience* ; but immersion is not thus fitted for universality, nor can be of the genius of the christian religion ; if on these, and other accounts, we might expect *before hand*, that sprinkling *would be*, nay *ought to be*, the mode, and by no means immersion ; unnecessary as it is in point of quantity of water, for purification ; but ludicrous, burthensome, and sometimes *wholly impracticable* : And if, added to these reasons from the nature of things against immersion, it appears *positively*, that not *immersion*, but *sprinkling*, certainly must have been the mode, by which *thousands at a time were baptized*, and sometimes by one man, and with-

* For then persons must not be plunged after the baptist fashion, *with cloaths on* ; nor merely be *dipped naked* ; but must either swim, or stay in the water some time ; if not, some, be well rubbed with cloths and brushes. Without one or other of these things, the mere dipping the body well wrapped round in garment upon garment, can no more put away the filth of the flesh, than sprinkling can. There is an infinite opportunity for wit in the dipping itself, and the new qualifications requisite for ministers to administer baptism to all *sizes*, by way of retaliation for the jests made on affusion : but as either party hereby design a sacred ordinance, all such diversion is vain.

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out any possible assistance given him; if not immersion, but sprinkling, must have been the mode, where there was no river in which men could be immersed; and where baptism was administered in private houses, in the rooms where the family ordinarily sat; and lastly, if not immersion, but sprinkling, must have been the mode, by which *one* (namely Saul) weak, and scarce able to stand through faintness, was baptized; it follows that immersion is a mode of baptism superstitious and of human invention; that sprinkling alone is apostolical; the form alone which was instituted by Christ, and every way worthy its divine institutor.

What is that I see yonder? A stupendous arch, glowing with all the grand colours in nature, in richest splendor and order. And what was its use, long before Abraham was born, or a peculiar religious polity framed? It was a *token* (precisely as baptism is,) *of the covenant of grace* *, made (precisely as baptism is,) *with all flesh*, Jew and Gentile; it was a sacrament of *water*. But all its beauty and glory consisteth in light falling upon *drops sprinkled at the end of a shower*.

* The spiritual application of the rainbow to the covenant of grace, is given us by inspiration itself in Isaiah liv. 9.

END OF THE NINETEENTH SERMON.

OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

SERMON XX.

I COR. xi. 23, 24, 25.

The Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks he brake it, and said, Take eat, this is my body which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.

THE precept, *this do in remembrance of me*, both appoints the celebration, and explains the nature of the sacrament of *the Lord's supper*. An ordinance the most affecting and endearing, the most solemn and glorious, and the fullest of benefits and comforts, above any thing else we are capable of on this side heaven. It shews us heaven opened,
or

or rather let down to earth. It exhibits the Savior appearing again on earth, by ministers, his proxies, and agents; and we not only dealing with him, but he with us. It represents him giving into our hands, immediately and individually, symbols and tokens of pardon and acceptance. It paints him acknowledging, in public form, our right through him to salvation and eternal glory; thereby repeating, confirming, and, as it were, *sealing and delivering* to us the celestial estate. It describes him, on this very supposition and idea, admitting us to his *table*, as being no more servants, much less criminals, but his friends, favourites, and brethren. It presents him spreading his table for us with viands emblematic of every thing necessary and comfortable, as bread and wine; and typical of himself given for us; of his *body* once *broken*, and his *blood shed* on our account; and of his heart and disposition towards us being the same as ever. Surely, in communicating with these thoughts upon our minds, we must feel ourselves on the borders of the *world of glory*; and be ready to cry out in the august business, *how dreadful is this place!* Surely *this is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.*

But high, very high as the rank of the holy Eucharist is, and unspeakable as its benefits are, the Quaker does not depreciate it more absurdly than the Papist improperly extols it. For while the nature and strength of unbelief, in the best of men, makes every help to our
faith,

faith, especially one like this, both necessary and precious: it is also no less true, that the mere outward performance of the sacrament (so called by way of eminence) cannot, as the Papist pretends, *confer grace*. For first, it is matter of fact, that many receive the outward ordinance without being the better for it. And secondly, the benefits of it come to us in a natural and rational way, without being mystically and unaccountably the effect of the mere work of the sacrament. While, thirdly, if grace and heaven flowed from the outward act of sacramenting, it would be at any time in the power of the worst of men to bestow, and of the worst of men to receive, grace and heaven by sacramenting; than which nothing can be more vain and horrid.

What the nature, and who the subjects of this ordinance are, will best appear by simply considering its first institution; where we shall equally discover its benefits and abuses.

But first it may be proper to premise, how affecting was both the *time* and *manner* of its origin; namely, *on the same night in which Christ was betrayed*; and at the last meal he ate before his crucifixion; and with those impassioned words, *with desire have I desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer*. As if he could not go chearfully to die for his people, till he had set up a ceremony, by which they should be strikingly made sensible of the benefits of his death: and as if, when he had clearly provided for our comfortable investiture with mercy and peace, he was ready immediately

mediately to pay the price of both, though that price was his own life and bloody sufferings. Certainly at such a season, and under such circumstances, no ordinance could be meditated, but from the tenderest study of the very greatest comfort and advantage to the church. We must expect therefore lofty service and consolation to have been intended by the sacrament; and that its structure should be well adapted to convey such service and consolation.

The institution then was on this wise. Bread being broken is delivered to the disciples, as an emblem of the body of Christ broken for them; and with this idea on their minds, they are commanded to eat that bread: and not only then, but *from time to time*, to eat bread in remembrance of the same body of Christ, as having been broken for their sins. Afterwards wine being poured out is handed to the disciples, as an emblem of Christ's blood shed for them, *for the remission of sins*: which being according to a stipulation on the one part of God the Father to Christ, that if Christ would die, all who plead that death should be saved; and on the other part, of God and Christ with sinners, that by the plea of this death, *whosoever would should be saved*; is therefore called by our Lord in the text, *the New Testament*, (or rather the *new covenant* *) *in his blood*. With this idea on our minds we are commanded to drink the holy wine: and therewith

* Διαθήκη.

therewith to remind ourselves of Christ having shed his blood, and so purchased *remission of sins* on our account and in our behalf.

It is therefore obviously necessary, that before we can communicate with propriety, it should *first be true*, that the body of Christ *was* given, and his blood *was* shed, *for us in particular*, for the remission of sins; otherwise the delivery of bread and wine to us as *symbols* and *tokens* hereof, with a special charge herewith to remind ourselves of our ancient, awful and complete redemption by Christ, would be acting a falsity: assuring us of what does not exist; a memorial of a *lye*. In which case the oftener a man communicated, the more would he nourish false and poisonous hopes, whereby precluding the due sentiments of his real lost estate, and so making proper application to Christ impossible, he might be said, in the *natural course of things*, to *eat and drink to himself condemnation*.

Thus by the very frame and idea of the sacrament it appears, that the use of it in order TO SAVE MEN is preposterous and ruinous: for the *constitution* of it shews, that *something else*, namely Christ's death, and not the sacrament only *representing* that death, is the means of salvation. Manifestly, the design of the sacrament is only to *assure* or *certify* salvation, in act and form, to a man who is *otherwise* and *previously entitled* to salvation. Where any one answers to the marks of the persons, for whom the Scripture in written words says, the body
and

and blood of Christ were given; there, those *verbal declarations* are in the sacrament turned into *deeds*; and under the symbols of bread and wine, the body and blood of Christ may be considered as actually given, in solemn ceremony, into their hands. Where any one is in the Scripture defined to be *interested in the sufferings and death of Christ*, there, to such an one is held up in the sacrament a moving representation of those sufferings and death, by way of *memorial* of what Christ hath undergone for us, and of the *remission of our sins* obtained by that means. *This do IN REMEMBRANCE of me. This do ye as oft as ye drink it in REMEMBRANCE of me.* A performance how sacred and heavenly, to the man within the description of an interest in Christ; but to all others how vain and unfit, and not to be celebrated plainly without impiety. *Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup: otherwise, adds the apostle, ye come together unto condemnation.*

And thus it may be seen, that the promiscuous delivery of the sacrament to all sick persons whatever, is improper and useless; nay detrimental, if it builds up any in the idea, that the mere rite itself alone is serviceable; or what may be received without previous qualification by a true faith in the Savior. Of what profit is the act customarily used in putting men into possession of an house or estate, where the title to either is usurped and false, and such as will never be admitted in law. And, as ever so many *repetitions* of such acts can
not

not *make a* title to either house or land; so receiving the sacrament ever so often, cannot *create* a right to heaven, unless such right is previously existing, in the answerableness of our experience and character to the requisitions of God's word.

The first enquiry then on this subject ought to be, what entitles any to heaven; or who are the persons for whom Christ's body was broken, and his blood shed, to obtain remission of their sins; and who therefore have reason and authority to remind themselves, agreeably to the idea of the sacrament, that such things have been done and won for them?

The second thing is, what is implied in the nature of such memorial in the sacrament?

First, then, it is evident, from the independence and purity and grandeur of God, from the weakness and sinfulness of man, from the work and sorrows of the Lord Jesus, from every thing in us, every thing in God, every thing in the law, to which in no instance we perfectly correspond, every thing in the gospel and the divine promises, that nothing can entitle a sinner to pardon and heaven, but the *merits of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*. These merits are placed in the midst, and proposed to all mankind for their use and availment. Such amongst men as do use and appropriate to themselves those merits, have the benefit of them. For these specially and eventually Christ's body was broken, and his blood shed: though the advantage of this body and

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blood

blood was proposed to, and pressed upon, all others of the human race without exception. According as it is written, *in Christ we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins; not by works of righteousness which we have done; not of works, lest any man should boast. Though this man is preached unto us the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses. Who-soever will, let him take of the water of life freely. Him hath God set forth (or proposed and published) as the propitiation for our sins. He is the Savior of all men, especially of those that believe. To as many as receive him, to them is given authority to become the sons of God.* Therefore the persons, who are conscious of disclaiming with abhorrence their own merits, and of assuming to themselves, though in the feeblest, poorest manner, the merits of Christ, venturing on the divine promises through him, building all their hopes on him, so receiving him in the heart, looking to him, longing for his salvation, and accounting him the pearl of great price, are they to whom heaven is promised and belongs: for these the body of Christ was broken and his blood shed; for their remission of sins in particular. These, consequently, are the identical persons who alone have reason and authority to remind themselves, in the sacrament especially, of all the great things that have been undergone and obtained for sinners.

Neither

Neither can these characters have any thing *to fear*, from trying themselves by not the simple act of faith alone, but what both precedes and follows that act, namely, repentance and holiness. For, whether *repentance* consist in *convictions of the evil of sin*, these men have it; being habitually sensible of such evil, and to such a degree, as at no time to be able to admit a thought of any thing but Christ, having the least possibility of virtue to save them: or if *repentance* consist in *practical turning away from sin*, these men have it; being deeply studious to avoid sin, and to such a degree as to mourn over all the very least remainders thereof in them; esteeming a victory over it most precious, and a being in any measure conquered by it most dreadful. And whether *holiness* consist in *separateness to God*, as the vessels and persons under the law were in this light deemed *holy*, *they* have it: not being able to allow, or to enjoy as heretofore, the world with its pleasures and manners; having secret and strong restraints therefrom, and true dissatisfaction with themselves upon detecting any thing worldly in their disposition or practice. Or if *holiness* consist in (what is hardly distinguishable from the other) an *exercise of piety towards God*, *benevolence towards men*, and *temperance and purity of heart* respecting themselves, *they* have it; being constantly desirous of devotedness, and glad of whatever excites it towards God; wishing to have none in heaven but him, and nothing on earth in comparison

of him ; deeming his smiles and comforts better than life. They also are charitable, and to the *souls* as well as the bodies of their fellow creatures ; rejoicing at their conversion, as well as happy to distribute to their temporal necessities. And equally are they impatient of any excess or impurity in themselves, thinking of each, and of *approaches* to either, with dread and anguish. Such, though interrupted and deficient, with sin mixing with all that is good in them, and at times much sin working in them, are, upon the whole and in the general, the characters of those, who possess the faith which *whosoever hath shall be saved*. They love misery for sin, and grieve because they cannot grieve more for it : they love strength in righteousness, and abound with sincere hatred of themselves for all inconstancy therein. For these, if for any, *Christ died*, not because he *foresaw* this goodness in them ; for he could foresee no more in them than he foresaw he would *give* them ; but because these, if any, have the *mark of the Lamb in their forehead*, or genuine evidences of that faith in Christ, which is *of the operation of God*.

Now while this description of the persons, for whom Christ gave his body and blood, requires integrity of principle, or reality and sincerity in our profession, yet that it supposes such persons not perfect, but *encompassed with infirmities*, and miserable sinners still, is plain from the *second general proposition* ; that is, *from what is implied in the sacramental memorial of Christ*.

Christ. The whole of which, as it goes upon the very idea of our *needing*, and *greatly* and *frequently needing* such a memorial, must presuppose the inconstancy and sinfulness but too great and too frequent in true believers themselves.

Is bread and wine in the sacrament to be used in *remembrance of Christ*? This implies that we are apt to *forget him*: apt either to look too much at present things, and too little at the Savior: or else, under sin, to look at our guilt, and not equally to consider its pardon; or, in a course of strict and righteous watchfulness, to look at our attainments, and omit attending duly to the performances and atonement of Christ. Every way, what can be more suited to our present condition, than a solemn ordinance, in which our only object is to remind ourselves of redemption and acceptance with God, through Christ? What, like such a commemoration of Christ, can tend to cure us of earthly mindedness, if negligent; of despondency, if overtaken with a fault; of spiritual pride, if walking in accuracy and holiness? which three evils, as they comprehend all others in the christian life, and are counteracted by a sensible, that is intelligent, receiving the sacrament, do show, that such memorial of Christ in the sacrament tends to *preserve us from every evil, to which we are liable in this world.*

Is a memorial of Christ enjoined us in the sacrament? This also implies every thing that can produce *every good of which we are capable*

in this world. Liberty from the law; the peace of Christ's own mind bequeathed to us in the gospel; reconciliation with God; adoption; that state of love which casteth out fear; joy in God unspeakable and full of glory; the tutelage and perpetual grace of the Holy Spirit; and the being from all eternity past vessels of mercy, intended, through all eternity future, to be filled with the divine riches and goodness: every thing grand and blessed, which our mortality can admit of even here, and our immortality possess hereafter, is all presented and ratified to us by the exhibition of Christ to our minds, in the sacrament.

For first, if with exhibiting an image of Christ's unknown agonies and death, in the broken bread and effused wine, every distinct believer is charged to remind himself, of all this having been suffered on *his behalf*, of the body of Christ having been broken, and his blood shed *for him*, and for many, *for the remission of sins*, it must follow, that by having these things forced upon our observation and remembrance in the sacrament, it becomes our duty to consider ourselves as no longer under the law but under Christ. We are bound therefrom to apprize ourselves, that *Christ hath been made a sin offering for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him*; that Christ hath fulfilled the law in precept, so deserving for us the condition of that fulfilment, namely, heaven; and hath borne the law in penalty, so extricating us from it, and securing us from hell and destruction: that thus *we are become*

become dead to the law as a covenant of works and life by the body of Christ: dead to the law, as if no such thing ever existed; wholly unfeeling to either its threatenings or stipulations; and in the same situation of mind, as if we had always been in Christ, and never liable to the law at any time whatever.

Secondly, *Peace I leave unto you: My peace I give unto you*, saith the Savior, on proceeding to die for us. Therefore, by his death, our consciences are discharged from all subjection to fear and terrors, as much as if we had never done wrong: that is, as much as the Savior's mind is, which never knew evil. Consequently, a memorial of Christ's death places before our very *senses*, as it were, the entire purity from blame or condemnation, equal to that of Christ's own innocence, into which we are put by his death; because the *blood of Jesus cleanseth from all sin*; and because by his *obedience we are constituted perfectly righteous*; therefore, of course, in either respect, HIS PEACE must belong to us; and an ordinance representing such his obedience and death, must unavoidably suggest to us *our right* to such *his peace*, spotless, perfect, and divine.

And thus, thirdly, the duty in the sacrament, of reminding ourselves of Christ's death, brings to our thoughts the *complete reconcilment of God to us, through him*.

Fourthly, as we are redeemed by Christ, and God is reconciled to us, not that we should remain no more related to God than before;

but that we may *receive the adoption of sons*; therefore the memorial of redemption by Christ immediately points us to the high privilege of our *adoption*, as *heirs of God*; and what is more, unspeakably more, **JOINT HEIRS WITH CHRIST.**

Fifthly, the consequence of the above liberty from the law, perfect peace of conscience, the divine reconciliation and adoption, implied in the memorials of the holy table, is a state of *love which casteth out fear*; and, as far as these glorious ideas are understood, of joy too big for utterance, a joy of the same kind, though not degree, with that we shall feel in a glorified state. The consequence also immediate of our restored and exalted condition, thus represented in the sacrament, must be, that of the *Holy Spirit's taking us under his wings*, and resuming the care and conduct of us under the *second Adam*, which we had forfeited and lost under the *first*. The *Holy Spirit* is made a *well of water springing up unto everlasting life to those who believe*. The Father gives him in Christ's name. So that here it behoves us to see, that all the stores of truth, comfort, sanctification and perseverance, which are treasured up in the *spirit of Christ*, as he is called, are, by the idea of an interest in Christ, and recollections thereof, thrown open for our most liberal and eternal use and enjoyment.

But as the having an inheritance in Christ, is connected with *predestination* thereto *before the foundation of the world*, as its original cause (according to Ephesians the first) therefore, whatever
assures

assures us of our proper acceptance through Christ, which the memorials at the altar do, connects with it the ineffable honor and bliss of our having been from all eternity past chosen to receive *the riches of his glory, as vessels of mercy, through all the endless ages of eternity to come.* Can human or angelic thought mount higher, than these reflections implied in remembering Christ's death would carry us? Would not these sacramental wings, as it were, easily and quickly bear us aloft, far above this little globe of earth, up to the empyreum itself? Would they not set us down in the immediate presence of the ever blessed God himself, and make us feel a commencement of that extacy which it is not lawful for a man to utter?

Such is the frame of this memorial, that in it we are not merely left to remind ourselves by inference and by emblems, that we are *saved with an everlasting salvation; but an express declaration* is made to us, in so many words, that *Christ's person was given* (both by himself and the father) and *his blood shed for us* in particular. Express declaration is here made to us, in opposition to all our pleas of unworthiness and guilt, that *the new covenant*, here exhibited to us, is not founded in our works or deservings, nor left pendent in the least degree upon us, but wholly rests on Christ and *his blood*; which having been actually shed, and being now here *pleaded* by us, our salvation comes out a matter of right, according to the terms of that covenant: *To as many as receive him.* So that the order of pleading Christ in the sacrament

crament is to satisfy us, both that we really do apprehend Christ, and are also *complete in him*. It is a contrivance, whereby we are brought to exercise faith, as it were, with our bodies, as well as our minds; that it might be no more in our power to doubt whether we are true believers, than whether we receive food when we eat it, or wine when we drink it. And thus it is a contrivance whereby we have our salvation every way ascertained and established to us.

I said, that in this ordinance, express declaration is made to *us in particular*, of mercy and acceptance. This follows clearly from the very idea of *making to us in particular a declaration*, that *Christ was given FOR US; and his blood shed*, not only for *many*, but FOR US, and for *many*, for the remission of sins. We here receive such notice and information immediately, and singly. We have it said to us here directly, *Thou art the man*. It is affirmed to us here, one by one, that *we have now no guiltiness*; for Christ bore it all. Each condemned malefactor is brought to the *bar*, as it were, of the communion-place, and pronounced, after suing out the royal act of grace, free from punishment. We are then *discharged by proclamation*—all judicature is over respecting us; and no more any liableness to a future trial for our sins can possibly remain. Thenceforward, only favor and blessing can accrue to us through all eternity: wherefore we read, that believers at the last trumpet shall be raised, not to be judged, for they were before acquitted, in
open

open court, in the church, before men and angels ; but to be transfigured, to *mount up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air* ; to be his assessors in the judgement of wicked men and devils ; and, that done, to go with him, in unutterable pomp, into the heaven of heavens, and *so shall we ever be with the Lord*.

Thus, as in mere believing on Christ, so much more, in those corporal acts of believing, performed in the sacrament, and in the pronouncing our sins thereupon remitted, are we come equally *to God the Judge of all, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant*.

These sentiments, in communicating, ought to be the more convincing to us from these considerations : First, as Christ calls it *eating and drinking in HIS PRESENCE* ; so must he always, therefore, be supposed to be *invisibly present* at his table : and, secondly, as the seal of the righteousness of faith, which Abraham put upon himself, was, because performed by the divine command, recognized, and spoken of by the Almighty as though it had been God's own act and deed ; and as, in general, whatever is done for us by our *commission*, is reputed our own act ; so this method, of declaring to us that Christ's body was given, and his blood shed for our remission of sins, being of divine appointment, must therefore be considered as having all the virtue, efficacy, and sweetness it would have, if done by God himself in his proper very person.

But

But what is more, in this holy employment, we are not only thus declared individually and particularly, and that virtually by God himself, to be passed from death unto life; which alone might be assurance and satisfaction enough to our minds for ever; but, by the holding up to our view, in this memorial, *the representations of Christ's death, and its inconceivable agonies*, equal to those of having one's body bruised and broken to pieces, and severed in the midst, we are reminded, that the pardon and reception of us by the Deity, are *not mere arbitrary acts* of good will and mercy, but that large, very large, the largest possible compensation hath been made to him, for our deliverance: that our sins have been *infinitely atoned for*: that a divine person hath condescended to become our substitute to bear our sins, and, by a most unspeakably awful, and adorably precious death in our room, hath left us nothing to receive from the great Law-giver of the Universe, but a forgiveness amply merited, and dearly paid for by the Lord Jesus. It is an acknowledgement to us, by the Deity, of a perfect equivalence, a sufficiently valuable consideration for our blessedness, having been accepted on our behalf. It is a shewing us the *receipt in full*, with the *value received*, for our transgressions, sins, and iniquities. Or rather, it is a delivery into our hands, and into our keeping, as it were, such receipt. For we are not only to *behold* the broken bread and effused wine, but to *take them*; to *eat* the one and *drink* the other.

TAKE—

TAKE—says the ordinance. It *forces* knowledge of salvation upon us. Do we doubt at any time our acceptance with Christ? Or whether we may assume an interest in him? *Take*—I give and present you with myself, says Christ, in giving us the emblems of himself. So that thus our hands handle of the word of life. Our scruples are destroyed; our wishes gratified: and the promises of receiving all who come to him, acted and fulfilled. Wherefore the sacrament is something more than all the *word* of God; which only consists of revelations of Christ, and promises and oaths of mercy through him: but here all these things receive an *accomplishment*; we are here actually incoasted into Christ, and into all his consummate benefits.

But do we *eat and drink* at the sacrament? and is the sacred board distinguished by the name of the LORD'S TABLE? This exceeds every thing yet observed in the glorious nature of the communion: for it implies, that we are not merely declared pardoned, and that virtually by God himself; and with an exhibition held up to us of the valuable consideration paid for this to divine justice, and with a delivery of the *band writing of ordinances*, the bond that stood against us, into our hands; but here, it seems, we *sit and sup* with our reconciled God, and Savior, and *He with us*. We *feast* with him, and He with us. Ordinarily, *the king is beld in the galleries* with delight, in the view and contemplation of his redeemed

deemed, in *all* their public worship; but *here the King sitteth at his table*; and they who put most honor upon his grace, do, like John, the beloved disciple, *lean on his bosom as he sits at meat*: while the cup, in which he drinks to us here, is particularly called *the cup of blessing*; as the bread is, by consequence, *the bread of blessing*.

Let me ask, *what more can* be done for us on earth, than the bringing us thus into God's *banqueting house*, and *his banner over us being love*? Heaven is more than this in *degree*, but not in *kind*. For when *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, are displayed to us in their *heavenly state*, it is under the symbol of their being seated only at the Lord's table in a kingdom above.

Indeed there is one circumstance, in which the Lord's table on earth seems to *exceed by far* that in glory: and that is, *in the nature and import of the viands*, of which we partake in the sacrament. For though it must be supposed, that in glory the blessed spirits do indeed to all eternity feed on the ideas of redeeming love; yet, on earth, *at the sacrament*, Christ gives us not merely his *merits* on which to feed in idea, but things representing his *very body and blood themselves*. We have no reason to think, that, in heaven, we shall actually feed on any thing representing the flesh and life of our Maker and Redeemer. O! love of Christ, immeasurable and only like itself! O! privilege of man inconceivable, and something more than

than terrestrial ! It suggests to us naturally, not only that if we are welcome to the very body and blood of Christ, we may plainly presume on being welcome to every thing he is, or has, or can do for us ; but it points out our situation to have been like that of a city perishing with famine, in which some public spirited and humane person comes forth and suffers himself to be put to death, that he may become food to keep some of the rest alive. We are taught in this ordinance, that the love of Christ to us is equal to such an act : that he hath loved us so as to lay down his life for us, to give his flesh for the life of the world ; and he obliges us here to represent him to ourselves under this idea, and calls our eating and drinking the symbols of his body and blood, *a feeding on him*, and so preserving unto everlasting life.

Thus the bread of blessing which we break is (mystically) *the communion*, (that is, *κοινωνία* the *partaking* of) *the body of Christ*, and the cup of blessing the *partaking* of the blood of Christ. O ! compared with this how mean and odious is that most famous cup of antiquity, Cleopatra's, in which a pearl of a million value was dissolved : behold *the pearl of great price*, so great as to be far beyond price, dissolved, in this cup of salvation, and its immortalizing wine freely handed to sinner after sinner at the (I had almost said) celestial table, and with this preface too, in delivering it and the bread

bread of life to us, *Eat, O friends ; drink, yea drink abundantly, O beloved.*

Who can doubt the love of that Christ, after being suffered from time to time to symbolize to ourselves *the eating his flesh and the drinking his blood?*

A few inferences from the nature of this high institution shall end the whole.

First, it is evident, that *transubstantiation*, or the change of the elements of bread and wine, by consecration, into the identical body and blood of Christ, is *perfectly unnecessary* to the sacrament : the *symbols* of that body and blood, in the bread and wine continuing unchanged and the same as before, are plainly sufficient to answer all the grandest intentions of the sacrament, without any such transubstantiation at all.

Secondly, the imagination of *merit* acquired in receiving the holy sacrament, is contrary to the *nature of things* : for it is not in the mind of man, to think it could be meritorious in a criminal to have a pardon declared and confirmed to him : but a declaration and confirmation to us of pardon is the main object of this ordinance. The imagination of merit therefore here can only proceed from a total misconception of the design of the Lord's Supper. What an honor, what a felicity, to be admitted a guest to a divine feast of mercy ; who can fancy it a favor done to Christ, that we will condescend to go to such a feast ? What impudence is contained in such a thought :

thought: what indevotion, what impiety. Sacramenting, therefore, with the idea that in so doing we perform some great act, with which afresh we deserve heaven, in any degree, proves us to be, whatever our own or others thoughts of us may be, *stout-hearted, and far from righteousness*. The true communicant is melted with thankfulness, for being indulged so greatly as to communicate, and therein feels every thing the *reverse* of pride and self-meritings.

Thirdly, the best way to communicate with profit and comfort suitably to the exalted frame of the ordinance, is, not to refer to *weeks preparation-books*, one opposing the other, and both substantially defective, perplexing and pernicious, but to consider two things: first, whether, weary and heavy laden for sin, and unable to deliver ourselves in any degree from its load, we have fled, and are habitually looking to Jesus only, the hope set before us, the single divinely constituted Savior and refuge for sinners, by not the common faith of the world, in the life, miracles, and history of Christ, but a faith of the heart and conscience, supremely desiring to rest and build on Christ for heaven, and from his merits alone to fetch peace and assurance; of which faith, the effect invariable, is a ruling and practical desire to be cleansed from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God. Secondly, to consider duly and largely the spirit and intention of the sacrament, and the things expressed and implied in it. ME-

DITATION on the sacrament is incomparably the best *preparation* for it. I will be bold to say, that no one who properly meditates on the glorious design of the sacrament, namely, to ratify heaven to us, and to put us personally and individually, and frequently through life, into possession of the divine favour, declaring to us our pardon, and shewing us the ground of it, and thereupon accordingly admitting us to the very table of, that is to the highest friendship and union with, the Lord, can be wholly dull or unbenefitted at the altar. In proportion as our notions of the sacrament are clearer and richer, and our sense of a right to receive it fuller and more distinct, our frames will of course be high, and the Savior's most gracious aim, in the institution, be accomplished and gratified. *According to thy faith shall it be unto thee.* And who ever would have the most abundant efficacy from the sacrament, must plainly think over the ordinance when finished, and recollect afterwards what hath been done to him in it: as it is high water not when the moon comes immediately to the meridian of a place, but by the rolling up of the waves some hours after. And to improve this sacred work to the utmost, we must also make the most of the precious opportunity now of nearness to Christ, and intimacy with him, to ask, like Esther at the feast of Ahasuerus, and like Herodias, at that of Herod, whatever our heart graciously affects, in a peculiar

culiar assurance of obtaining, like them, our every request.

Fourthly, now may be seen, how the sacrament is a *vehicle of grace*, of every grace possible to us here below. Not by a strange and mystical illapse into us of something unknown and unfelt before from above, upon the mere and only celebration of the duty, but in a rational and natural way. For every thing here suggests thoughts, which obviously *strengthen our faith*, and *elevate us with hope*. Every thing here tends to *raise in us an high love to God and Christ*, by painting *their love to us*, and the goodness there must be in them to be capable of such love to us. Every thing here tends to *enliven prayer*, from the reflection, that *he who hath thus loved us, even beyond himself, unto death*, will be happy to do for us *beyond all we can ask or think*. Every thing here, as it renews pardon and heaven to us again and again, notwithstanding our frequent and continual shortcomings and sins, tends to work in us an ingenuous and hearty shame and repentance for our offences, and to fill us with ardent indignation against ourselves for them: and therefore of course every thing here must tend not only to create in us this prayer, *let me rather die than sin thus again*, but to make us sincerely and anxiously *watchful* against the first risings of, and all opportunities to, or motives for, our respective iniquities. And thus every thing here leads to *singleness of eye*, devotedness of heart, and diligence and industry in all holi-

ness. While at the same time every thing here tends to make all quarrels and unkindness, and even coolness amongst fellow christians impossible. Because now each man having, by the very supposition of the sacrament, greatly affronted God by sin, and being still embraced with kindness, and confirmed in forgiveness, most compassionately, freely, and fully, cannot fail under these ideas of shewing mercy to a fellow-man for his petty offences. Want of tenderness to offending brethren, seems not only monstrous and unnatural, but even impossible to one living under the impresson of the office of sacraments. And because now a company of pardoned criminals meet all together to sup together with their Lord, in token of his perfect reconciliation, and most affectionate regards for them, such meeting must beget the most mutual love, and every good work whatever.

What doing good for evil, what universal charity, and what unbounded liberality is obtruded upon us, by the example in the sacrament, of one not grudging to give his very life and self to prevent the pain, and to procure the happiness of even his very enemies.

In this *rational* and *natural* way does the Sacrament before us *convey grace*; *every* grace: in this *accountable* manner does it appear, that nothing in this world can contribute to make us more completely either holy or happy, than the Lord's table: a table fitly called the *Lord's*, for none but himself could have

have thought of such a one: where, emblems of his body and blood, are prepared for our entertainment, and where, in beholding *his* glory, *we* are changed *into the same image, from glory to glory, by the spirit of the Lord.**

* 2 Cor. iii. 18.

F I N I S.

E R R A T A.

- Page 54, line 8. for *after the men*, read *after the manner of men*.
64, line 17, for *manly*, read *with manly spirit*.
167, for lines 5, 6, 7, read *shews, that not the common historical faith of the bulk of Christendom, but something much higher and nobler than it, is the true, saving faith of holy scripture*.
227, Insert the parentheses (lines 18, 19) immediately after *Believers*, in the preceding line.
301, line the last, for *to their exclusion*, read *almost to their exclusion*.

